

Sūrah Al-A'raf

[The Heights]

[Sūratul-A'raf was revealed in Makkah and it has 206 Verses and 20 Sections]

Verses 1 - 7

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 ﴿١﴾ كُتِبَ أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ فَلَا يَكُنْ فِي صَدْرِكَ حَرَجٌ مِنْهُ
 لَتُنذِرَ بِهِ وَذِكْرَى لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢﴾ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُم مِّنْ
 رَبِّكُمْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٣﴾
 وَكُم مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا فَبَاءَأَهَا بِأَسْنَاءَ بَيِّنَاتٍ أَوْهَمُ قَائِلُونَ
 ﴿٤﴾ فَمَا كَانَ دَعْوَاهُمْ إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ بِأَسْنَاءُ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا إِنَّا كُنَّا
 ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٥﴾ فَلَنَسْأَلَنَّ الَّذِينَ أُرْسِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَنَسْأَلَنَّ الْمُرْسَلِينَ
 ﴿٦﴾ فَلَنَقْصُصَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِعِلْمٍ وَمَا كُنَّا غَائِبِينَ ﴿٧﴾

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Alif, Lām, Mīm, Sād. [1] (This is) A Book sent down to you - so, let there be no constraint on your heart because of it - that you may warn through it, and (it is) an advice for the believers. [2]

Follow what has been sent down to you from your Lord, and do not follow any friends other than Him. Little you are receptive to advice! [3]

How many a town We have destroyed, and Our punishment came upon them at night or while they were having midday nap. [4] So, their cry, when Our punishment came upon them, was not but that they said, "we were wrongdoers indeed." [5]

So, We shall ask those to whom the messengers were sent and We shall ask the messengers. [6] Then We shall tell them the whole story, with knowledge, and We were never absent. [7]

Commentary

An overview of the Sūrah shows that most of the subjects it deals with are related to *Ma'ād* (Return to the Hereafter) and *Risālah* (Prophethood). The former appear from the beginning of the Sūrah upto approximately the end of the sixth section. Then, from the eighth to the twenty first section, there is a detailed description of past prophets, events about their communities, their reward and punishment and the punishment which overtook them.

In the statement: *فَلَا يَكُنْ فِي صَدْرِكَ حَرَجٌ* appearing in the first verse, the address is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and he has been told: This Qur'ān is the Book of Allah sent down to you. This should not cause any constraint on your heart. The word: *حَرَجٌ* (*ḥaraj*) translated here as 'constraint' means that 'you should have no anguish or apprehension in conveying the Qur'ān and its injunctions lest people belie it and hurt you.' (As reported from Abū Al-Āliyah - Mazharī)

The hint given here is that Allah who has sent down this Book on you has also made arrangements that you shall remain protected and that takes care of any anguish on your part. Some commentators have said that '*ḥaraj*' or 'constraint on the heart' refers to the constraint experienced by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who, because of his affectionate concern for people, felt pain when they would not believe despite having heard the Qur'ān and its injunctions. To offset this constraint, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been told that the duty with which he has been obligated is simply to make the call and convey the message. Once this is done, it is not his responsibility to see who becomes a Muslim and who does not. Therefore, there was no reason for him to be anxious.

The statement: *فَلَنَسْأَلَنَّ الَّذِينَ أُرْسِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَنَسْأَلَنَّ الْمُرْسَلِينَ* in verse 6 refers to the day of *Qiyāmah* when people will be asked by Allah how did they receive the messengers and Books sent to them by Him - and the messengers will be asked if they did convey to their communities the message and injunctions Allah had sent them with. (Narrated by Baihaqī from

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه - Maḏharī)

It appears in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim on the authority of a narration from Sayyidnā Jābir رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked people during the address of his Last Ḥajj: When, on the day of *Qiyāmah*, you will be asked about me - whether or not I have conveyed the message of Allah to you - what will you, then, say in reply? (فَمَا أَنْتُمْ قَائِلُونَ). All Ṣaḥabah present there said: We will say that you have conveyed the message of Allah to us and you have fulfilled the trust of Allah at its best and you have wished and done what was most beneficial for the community. Hearing this, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: اللَّهُمَّ أَشْهَدُ (O Allah, You be witness).

According to a narration in the Musnad of Aḥmad, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: On the day of *Qiyāmah*, Allah Ta'ālā will ask me if I have conveyed His message to His servants and I shall say in response: Yes, I have. Therefore, all of you should make sure that those who are present do convey my message to those absent. (Maḏharī)

'Those absent' refers to people who were present during that time but were not present at that particular occasion - as well as generations which would come later on. To convey to them the message of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم means that people of every time should continue the chain of conveying this message to the generations coming next, so that all children of Adam to be born right through the day of *Qiyāmah* will have received this message.

Verses 8 - 10

وَالْوَزْنُ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْحَقُّ فَمَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ
 ﴿٨﴾ وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ بِمَا
 كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَظْلُمُونَ ﴿٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنَّاكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلْنَا
 لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَعَايِشَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

And the Weighing on that day is definite. So, those whose scales are heavy, they are the successful. [8] And those whose scales are light, they are those who have

brought loss to themselves, as they used to be unjust to
Our verses. [9]

And We gave you a place on earth, and made for you
therein the means of living. Little you are grateful. [10]

Commentary

In the first verse, it was said: **وَالْوَزْنُ يَوْمَئِذٍ بِالْحَقِّ** (And the Weighing on that day is definite). It means that the weighing of good and bad deeds on the day of Judgement is due and true. There is no room for doubt in it. Here, the hint given is that let no one be deceived by the idea that things which usually get to be weighed or measured are things having some weight or heaviness. Human deeds, good or bad, have no body or mass which could be weighed. How, then, would deeds be weighed? First of all, the reason is that the authority of Allah is absolute. He is powerful over everything. Why then, would it be necessary that something we cannot weigh could not be weighed by Allah Almighty as well? Then, other than that, we have before us, in our time, countless new instruments which claim to weigh or measure anything in the world. They no more need the traditional balance or scales or rod or tip. Modern instruments can weigh what nobody ever thought could be weighed, air, electric current, heat, cold, and so many other things. A meter is all you need. Now, if Allah Almighty, the Maker of makers, in His perfect power, could weigh or measure human deeds - with or without a device - what is there in it which would make it to be something far out to believe? Leaving this aside for a moment, the Creator of the Universe does have the power to transform our deeds at some time into a material presence, even give it some shape or form (interesting that people would believe something like this happening in a Spielberg movie, yet squirm at the religious view of things as would come to pass). There are many Āḥadīth from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم which confirm that human deeds will appear in particular shapes and forms during *Barzakh* (the post-death ~ pre-resurrection state) and *Maḥshar* (Resurrection). Good deeds of a person will, in forms beautified, become the companions of the grave - and evil deeds would crawl all over in the form of snakes and scorpions. A Ḥadīth says that a person who has not paid the Zakah due against his wealth, that wealth will reach his grave in the shape of a poisonous snake to bite him and say: I am your wealth, I am your treasure.

It is said in a Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth that Al-Baqarah and 'Āl-'Imrān, the two Sūrahs of the Holy Qur'ān will come on the plains of Resurrection in the form of two dense clouds and cast their shade over those who used to recite these Sūrahs.

Similarly, there are countless narrations from Ḥadīth, all authentic and reported reliably, which indicate that once these good and bad deeds of ours pass away from this mortal world, they will transform into particular shapes and forms and be there on the plains of Resurrection in a material presence.

There are even verses of the Qur'ān which confirm it. It is said: *وَوَجَدُوا مَا عَمِلُوا حَاضِرًا*, that is, 'what people had done in the world, they would find that present there - 18:49.' In a verse of Sūrah Az-Zalzalah, it is said: *مَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ*, that is, 'whoever does good even the weight of a particle shall see it on the day of *Qiyāmah*, and whoever does evil even the weight of a particle shall see that too in *Qiyāmah*.' Things as described here obviously lend to the possibility that human deeds will come in some nuclear form of existence. This is something which needs no further interpretations as what is crucial is the compensation of deeds which will exist and be perceptible.

Under these circumstances, weighing deeds does not remain something difficult or far out. But, human beings are what they are. Given their limited framework of reasoning, they take everything on the analogy of their own present state of being and this is the criterion they have to judge things around them. So used to it they are that they just cannot act otherwise. It is this state of being of theirs which the Qur'ān has put in words which appear in Sūrah Ar-Rūm: *يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِمَّنْ* *الْخَيْرَةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ غَفُلُونَ*. It means that 'these people know an obvious aspect of mortal life (and that too, not the whole of it) and about the Hereafter they are totally heedless - 30:7.' In their onslaught on the obvious and the perceptible, they will shake the earth and the space to find out the unfound, but the great field of the reality of things the unfolding of which has to take place in the 'Ākhirah is something they are totally unaware of.

Therefore, in this verse, special care has been taken while saying: *وَالْوِزْنُ يُوْزَنُ* (And the Weighing on that day is definite) so that man, all infatuated with the obvious, may not be able to deny the weighing of

deeds in the Hereafter - which stands proved from the Holy Qur'an and is the collective belief of the Muslim Ummah.

That there will be the weighing of deeds on the day of *Qiyāmah* is a subject dealt with in many verses of the Holy Qur'an from various angles, and in Ḥadīth, its details abound.

The Weighing of Deeds : A Doubt and its Answer

Out of the details on the weighing of deeds appearing in the Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the first to ponder about is the oft-narrated statement that, on the day of Resurrection, the heaviest in weight shall be the Kalimah: لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ اللَّهِ (There is no god but Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah). The scalepan which holds this Kalimah shall outweigh the rest.

Tirmidhi, Ibn Mājah, Ibn Ḥibbān, Baihaqī and Ḥākim have reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: A man of my Ummah will be brought before the entire creation on the plain of Resurrection. Then, ninety nine of his Books of Deeds will be brought in. Each scroll of his Book of Deeds will be as long as far he could see - and all these Books of Deeds shall be full of sins and evils. This person will be asked if everything written in these Books of Deeds was correct, or had the angels done any injustice to him, or had they written anything there which was not as it happened. He will admit: O my Lord, whatever is written there is correct. But, in his heart, he will be nervous while worrying about how would he find his deliverance from this situation. That will be the time Allah Ta'ālā will say: Today, there is no injustice for anyone. Against all your sins, We have a testimonial of your being good, with Us, written where, is your Kalimah: أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ (I testify that there is no god but Allah and I testify that Muhammad ﷺ is His servant and His Messenger). That person will say: O my Lord, what weight this little note will carry against such a big black Book of Deeds? Then, it would be said: No injustice will be done to you. Then, all those Books of Deeds full of sins will be placed in one scalepan and in the other, this note with the Kalimah of 'Imān on it. The scalepan with the Kalimah on it shall weigh heavier and the scalepan with all those sins on it shall turn to be lighter. After having related this event, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Nothing can weigh more than the

name of Allah. (Mazharī)

According to a narration from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه in Musnad al-Bazzār and Mustadrak Ḥākim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: At the time of his death, Nuḥ عليه السلام assembled his sons around him and said: I order you to abide by the Kalimah: لا اله الا الله (*Lā Ilāha Illallāh*) because, should the heavens and the earth be placed in one pan of the scale and the Kalimah: *Lā Ilāha Illallāh* in the other, the pan containing the Kalimah shall invariably remain heavier. Other narrations on the same subject have been reported from Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and Sayyidnā Abū-ad-Dardā' رضى الله عنه supported by reliable transmitting authorities and are spread over in various Ḥadīth collections. (Mazharī)

According to these narrations, a believing Muslim who recites the Kalimah shall always find the scale heavier in his favour, no matter how many sins he carries on him. But, many other verses of the Qur'ān and narrations of Ḥadīth prove that the good and bad deeds of a Muslim shall be weighed. For some, the scalepan with good deeds will be heavier, for some others, that of sins. The one whose scalepan with good deeds is heavier will have his salvation while the one whose scalepan with sins and evils is heavier will have his punishment. For example, in Sūrah Al-Anbiyā' it is said:

وَنَضَعُ الْمَوَازِينَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ فَلَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْئًا وَإِنْ كَانَ مِثْقَالُ حَبَّةٍ
مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ أَتَيْنَا بِهَا وَكَفَى بِنَا حَاسِبِينَ ،

And We shall set up Scales of Justice on the day of Judgment. Then, not the least injustice will be done to anyone. And if there be (good or bad) the weight of a mustard seed, We shall bring it (to account on the scale for deeds) and We are sufficient to take account - 21:47.

And in Sūrah Al-Qārī'ah, it is said:

فَأَمَّا مَن ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَهُوَ فِي عِيشَةٍ رَّاغِبَةٍ وَأَمَّا مَن خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأَمَّهُ
هَٰوِيَةٌ

Whoever has his scale of good deeds heavy will be in life blissful and whoever has his scale of good deeds lighter, his place will be Hell -101:6-9.

Explaining these verses, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه said: The believer whose good deeds on the scale are heavier will go to *Jannah* with his deeds - and the one whose evil deeds on the scale are heavier will be sent to *Jahannam* with his deeds. (Reported by Al-Baihaqī in *Shu'ab al-Īmān* - Mazharī)

Based on a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه, it has been reported in Abū Dāwūd: If a shortage is found in the *Farā'id* of a servant, Allah Ta'ālā will ask if that servant has some *Nawāfil* to his credit. If they are there, the shortage of the obligatory will be compensated by the voluntary. (Mazharī)

The outcome of all these verses and Ḥadīth narrations is that the scale will some times be heavier in favour of a believer and lighter at some others. Therefore, scholars of Tafsīr say that this shows that weighing in *Maḥshar* (Resurrection) will be twice. First to be weighed will be belief and disbelief through which distinction will be made between a believer and a disbeliever. In this weighing whoever has even just the declaration of faith (Kalimah) in the Book of Deeds, his or her scale will become heavier and he or she will be separated from the group of disbelievers. Then, there will be a second weighing of good and bad deeds. In this, the good deeds of one believer will be heavy on the scale while the other will find the scale heavy with evil deeds - and everyone will have his or her punishment or reward in accordance with that. Thus, the subject as dealt with in all these verses and narrations of Ḥadīth becomes synchronized. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

How Would Deeds Be Weighed?

According to a Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه which appears in Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: On the day of *Qiyāmah*, there will come some heavy people whose weight, in the sight of Allah, will not be worth the weight of even a mosquito - and, in support, he recited the verse of the Qur'ān: نَلَا نَقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ وَزْنًا that is, on the day of *Qiyāmah*, We will not give them any weight - 18:105 (Mazharī).

And featuring the virtues (*manāqib*) of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه, there is a Ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: His legs look so thin but, by Him in whose hands lies my life, on the balance of justice for the day of *Qiyāmah*,

their weight shall be more than the weight of the mountain of Uḥud.

Then, there is the Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه with which Imām al-Bukhārī has concluded his book, the Ṣaḥīḥ. In it, it is said that there are two words very light when said but very heavy when weighed on the Scale of Deeds, and with Allah, they are dear, and they are: *سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ* (*Subḥānallāhi wa bi-ḥamdihī* : Pure is Allah and Praised is He) *سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ الْعَظِيمِ* (*Subḥanallahil-'Aẓīm* : Pure is Allah the Great).

As narrated by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to say that saying: *سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ* (*Subḥān Allāh*) fills half of the pan on the scale of deeds while saying: *أَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ* (*Alḥamdulillah*) fills the other half.

Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī and Ibn Ḥibbān report with sound authority from Sayyidnā Abū-d-Dardā رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: No deed will be heavier than good morals on the scale of deeds.

And to Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī رضى الله عنه, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: I tell you about two things doing which is not hard for anyone - but, on the scale of deeds, they shall be the heaviest -(1) good morals, and (2) usually observing silence, that is, not talking unless necessary.

In his Kitāb al-Zuhd, Imām Aḥmad has reported from Sayyidnā Ḥāzim رضى الله عنه that angel, Jibra'īl al-Amin came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم while someone there was weeping in fear of Allah. Angel Jibra'īl said: All human deeds will be weighed, but human tears flowing from the fear of Allah and 'Ākhirah is a deed which would not be weighed. Rather, one such tear would put off the wildest fire of Jahan-nam. (Maḥzarī)

A Ḥadīth says about a person present on the plain of Resurrection. When he will look at his Book of Deeds, he will notice very few good deeds there. He will be nervous. All of a sudden, something will rise like a cloud and fall right into the scalepan of his good deeds. He will be told that this was in return for his teaching of the faith which multiplied onwards when people acted in accordance with it, and there was a share kept aside for him with each single follower of his

teaching. (Mazharī, from Sayyidnā Ibn al-Mubārak)

Tabarānī reports from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: A person who goes to the graveyard with the Janāzah, two karats will be placed on his scale of deeds. Other narrations say that the weight of this karat will be equal to the mountain of Uḥud.

He has also reported from Sayyidnā Jābir رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: One's first deed to be placed on the scale of deeds will be the good deed of spending on one's family and taking care of their needs.

Imām al-Dhahabī has reported from Sayyidnā 'Imrān ibn Ḥuṣayn عليه السلام that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: On the day of *Qiyāmah*, when the ink used by the 'Ulamā to write about the religion and its rules will be weighed against the blood of *shuhadā'* (martyrs), the weight of the ink used by 'Ulama will turn out to be more than the weight of the blood of martyrs.

There are many more Aḥādīth relating to the weighing of deeds as in *Qiyāmah*. Some of them have been mentioned here as they shed light on the merit and worth of particular deeds.

The mode of weighing deeds as mentioned in these narrations of Ḥadīth seems to be different. Some indicate that the doers of deeds will be the ones weighed and it will be they who would be heavy or light according to their deeds. Some others show that their Books of Deeds will be weighed. Still others prove that deeds themselves would become personified and they will be measured. Tafsīr authority, Ibn Kathīr, after having reported all these narrations, has said that it is possible that the weighing is repeated several times in different ways and, it is obvious, the full reality of these matters is known to Allah Ta'ālā alone - and for doing what one does in real life, it is, for all practical purposes, not necessary to know this reality. Quite sufficient for us is to know that our deeds shall be weighed. If our deeds turn out to be lighter on the scale of deeds, we shall deserve punishment. Then, it is an entirely different matter that Allah Ta'ālā, in His grace, by Himself, or by the intercession of a Nabiyy or Waliyy, forgives us our sins and we stand delivered from punishment.

As for the likelihood that some people will have their salvation on the sole virtue of their having said and believed in the Kalimah of 'Īmān (*Lā Illāha Illallāh*) and all sins accruing to them will be forgiven because of that - as narrated in some of these narrations - that belongs to the exception mentioned above and which is beyond the general regulation and is a special manifestation of the grace and mercy of Allah Ta'ālā.

In the two verses the Tafsīr of which you have just read through, sinners were warned against the disgrace on the plain of Resurrection and the Divine punishment that would come in its wake. Then comes the third verse which mentions the blessings of Allah Ta'ālā and persuades people to accept truth and act accordingly by suggesting that Allah has bestowed on them full ownership and control on the earth and has opened thousands of avenues of comfort for them. It is as if the Master of the Universe has made this whole earth and what it contains a giant warehouse of human needs and comforts, a most comprehensive inventory of that inside it. Now, what is left for human beings to do is to learn to go in there, take out what they need and use it how they will. Science and technology are essentially no more than a trained method of taking out things created by the Master of the Universe and stored in this warehouse, properly and nicely, and use it soundly and beneficially. One who is short on sense and manners and does not know how to take things out from this warehouse, or does not understand how to use what he has taken out, he remains deprived of their benefits. An intelligent person benefits from both.

In short, Allah Ta'ālā has placed all that human beings need on and in this earth which demands that they should be grateful to Him all the time under all conditions. But, human beings are prone to heedlessness. They would not take much time to forget the favours of their Creator and Master - only to return to the same world of things. So, at the end of the verse, it is in a mode of complaint that it was said: قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ (Little you are receptive to advice).

Verses 11-18

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَاكُمْ ثُمَّ صَوَّرْنَاكُمْ ثُمَّ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ

فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ ۖ لَمْ يَكُنْ مِنَ السَّاجِدِينَ ﴿١١﴾ قَالَ
 مَا مَنَعَكَ إِلَّا تَسْجُدَ إِذْ أَمَرْتُكَ ۖ قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ
 نَّارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ ﴿١٢﴾ قَالَ فَاهْبِطْ مِنْهَا فَمَا يَكُونُ لَكَ
 أَنْ تَتَكَبَّرَ فِيهَا فَاخْرُجْ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الصَّاغِرِينَ ﴿١٣﴾ قَالَ أَنْظِرْنِي
 إِلَى يَوْمٍ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ قَالَ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنظَرِينَ ﴿١٥﴾ قَالَ فَبِمَا
 أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَأَقْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴿١٦﴾ ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُنَهُمْ
 مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَائِلِهِمْ
 وَلَا تَجِدُ أَكْثَرَهُمْ شَاكِرِينَ ﴿١٧﴾ قَالَ اخْرُجْ مِنْهَا مَذْءُومًا
 مَّدْحُورًا ۚ لِمَنْ تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنْكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٨﴾

And We created you, then fashioned you, then We said to the angels, "Prostrate before 'Ādam." So, they all prostrated, except Iblīs. He did not join the prostrate. [11] Allah said, "What stopped you from prostrating when I ordered you?" He said, "I am better than him. You have created me of fire, and created him of clay." [12] He said, "Then, go down from here, it is not for you to be arrogant here. So, go. You are of the low." [13]

He said, "Then give me respite until a day when all will be resurrected." [14] He (Allah) said, "Respite is given to you." [15] He said, "Then as You have made me go astray, I swear that I will sit for them (in ambush) on Your straight path. [16] Then I will come upon them from in front of them and from behind them and from their right and from their left. And you will not find most of them grateful. [17]

He (Allah) said, "Get out of here, condemned, rejected. Indeed, those of them who follow you, I will fill Hell with you all together. [18]

Commentary

The event relating to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام and the Shayṭān has appeared earlier in Section four of Sūrah Al-Baqarah (Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, English Translation, volume I, page 170, under verse 34). Some

aspects of the subject have been covered in comments given there. Answers to some others are being given here.

How Long was the Respite given to Iblīs?

It was exactly at the time Iblīs was under the wrath of Allah, he made a prayer, a strange prayer indeed. He asked for a lease of life until the day of Resurrection. The words in which Allah Ta'ālā answered the prayer, as they appear in this verse, are no more than: **إِنَّكَ مِنَ النَّظَرَيْنِ** (Respite is given to you). From these words, given the nature of the question and the answer, it can be understood that this respite was given until the Resurrection as asked by him. But, what is not stated in this verse clearly is whether the giving of respite mentioned here is until the Resurrection as asked by Iblīs, or is for some other duration. But, in another verse, the words: **إِلَى يَوْمِ الْوَقْتِ الْمَعْلُومِ** (Till the day of the appointed time - 15:38) appear at this place which, on the surface, seem to suggest that the respite till the day of *Qiyāmah* as asked by Iblīs was not given. Instead, given to him was a respite till a particular time which is preserved in Divine knowledge. The outcome is that the prayer of Iblīs was answered - though not completely. He was given respite till a particular time and not till the day of Resurrection or *Qiyāmah*.

Reported in Tafsīr Ibn Jarīr is a narration from Suddiy which supports this view. The exact words of the report are:

فلم ينظره الى يوم البعث و لكن انظره الى يوم الوقت المعلوم وهو يوم ينفخ في الصور النفخة الاولى فصعق من في السموت ومن في الارض فمات،

Allah Ta'ālā did not give respite to Iblīs till the day of Resurrection, instead, He has given him respite till a day the time of which is appointed and that is the day when the Horn will be blown the first time and whoever there is in the heavens or the earth shall be stunned, and dead.

In summation, we can say that the Shayṭān had actually asked for a respite in his prayer till the time when the second Horn will be blown and all the dead will be resurrected. This is what is called: **يوم البعث** (Yowm al-Ba'th). If this prayer was answered as asked, it would have meant that Iblīs was to be alive as based on his prayer while the facts on the ground would have been different: That would be a time

when nothing will be alive except the One Being of the Eternally-Alive and the Self-Sustaining *Hayy* and *Qaiyyūm* and that would be the time when the great promise of: كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ وَيَبْقَى وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ (All that is on it will perish and to remain there shall be the Face of your Lord, full of majesty, bounty and honour - 55:26-27) will stand immensely manifested. On that basis, Iblīs was not to live to see that time. Therefore, his one prayer for respite till the Yowm al-Ba'th was not granted, instead of which, the time of the respite was changed to *Yowma yunfakhu fi as-ṣur*, till the day blown is the Horn, and granted at that. The effect would be that death shall be the order of the day for the whole creation. Iblīs will have his death as well. When all others are resurrected, he too shall stand resurrected.

These details remove the possible doubt that could arise from the verse: كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ (All that is on it will perish -55:26) referred immediately above specially in relation with this prayer. The apparent contradiction between the two thus stands resolved.

The substance of this investigation is that Yowm al-Ba'th and Yowm al-Waqt al-Ma'lum are two separate days. Iblīs had asked for respite till the Yowm al-Ba'th. This was not granted wholly. Instead of that, a change was made and respite was given till the Yowm al-Waqt al-Ma'lum. Ḥaḍrat Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī, in Bayan al-Qur'ān, has preferred the view that these two are really two separate days. In fact, from the time of the blowing of the first Horn upto the entry into Paradise or Hell, it will be a long day with different things happening at different times in it. Based on these different happenings, that day could be attributed to every event which takes place therein. For instance, it could be called the day of the blowing of the Horn (صُور) and the day of perishing (فَنَاء), as well as, the day of Resurrection (بُعْث) and the day of Recompense (جَزَاء). This helps resolves all doubts and difficulties, فَلِلَّهِ الْحُكْمُ .

Can the Prayer of a Disbeliever be Acceptable?

The question comes from the verse: وَمَا دُعَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ (And the prayer of disbelievers is but in vain - 13:14), it is usually taken that the prayer made by a disbeliever is not answered. But, from this event concerning Iblīs and the statement in the verse, this difficulty becomes obvious. The answer is that, in this mortal world, even the prayer of a

disbeliever can be answered - so much so, that even the prayer of the foremost disbeliever, Iblīs, was answered. But, in the Hereafter, the prayer of a disbeliever will not be answered. The verse quoted above relates to the Hereafter ('Ākhirah). It has nothing to do with this mortal world.

The Event of 'Ādam and Iblīs : The Rationale of Different Words

This story appears in the Holy Qur'ān at several places. The words used in relevant questions and answers differ everywhere, though the event is the same. The reason is that the subject remains the same when the main event is described. That the words remain exactly the same everywhere is not necessary. A narration could be based on meaning too. If the unity of subject and sense exists, variations in words do not deserve consideration.

What made Iblīs speak the way he did before Allah?

The place where Iblīs dared to speak was in the Most August conceivable Presence of the Master of all Honour where the awe and majesty of the occasion would not allow even angels and prophets and messengers to breathe. How did he do that? 'Ulamā say that this was a sombre and highly cutting manifestation of the Divine wrath that, because of the rejection of Iblīs, his view was so obstructed (*hijāb*) that he became blind to the grandeur and awe of Allah Ta'ālā and irreverence came down to settle on him all over. (Abridged from Bayān al-Qur'ān)

The Assault of Shayṭān is Multi-Dimensional, not simply Four-Sided

In the present verse (17), Iblīs is said to have identified four sides from which he planned to mislead the children of 'Ādam, that is, the front, the rear and the right and the left. But, the purpose here is not to set up any limits. Instead, the sense is that this will be from all sides and directions. Therefore, the probability of his leading people astray from above and beneath the feet does not contradict it. Similarly, the saying of the Ḥadīth that - Shayṭān can enter the human body and move through the arteries and veins of blood and take command of the whole body - is also not contradictory to this.

In the cited verses (13 & 18), the Shayṭān has been commanded to leave the heavens twice. First, when it was said: فَاخْرُجْ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الصُّفْرَيْنِ (So, go. You are of the low.) and then, when it was said: قَالَ اخْرُجْ مِنْهَا مَذْءُومًا (Get

out of here, condemned ...). Here, the first saying is perhaps a proposal while the other is its implementation. (Abridged from Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verses 19 - 25

وَيَا دَادُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ فَكُلَا مِنْ حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٩﴾ فَوسَّسَ لَهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ لِيُبْدِيَ لَهُمَا مَا وُورِيَ عَنْهُمَا مِنْ سَوْآتِهِمَا وَقَالَ مَا نَهَاكُمَا رَبُّكُمَا عَنْ هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَا مَلَكَتَيْنِ أَوْ تَكُونَا مِنَ الْخَالِدِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَقَاسَمَهُمَا إِنِّي لَكُمَا لَمِنَ النَّاصِحِينَ ﴿٢١﴾ فَدَلَّهُمَا بِغُرُورٍ فَلَمَّا ذَاقَا الشَّجَرَةَ بَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوْآتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفْنَ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وُرْقِ الْجَنَّةِ وَنَادَاهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا أَلَمْ أَنْهَكُمَا عَنْ تِلْكَ الشَّجَرَةِ وَأَقُلُّ لَكُمَا إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَكُمَا عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ ﴿٢٢﴾ قَالَا رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنْفُسَنَا وَإِنْ لَمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾ قَالَ اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَى حِينٍ ﴿٢٤﴾ قَالَ فِيهَا تَحْيَوْنَ وَفِيهَا تَمُوتُونَ وَمِنْهَا تُخْرَجُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

And O 'Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise, and eat from wherever you like, but do not go near this tree, otherwise you shall join the transgressors." [19]

Then Satan whispered to them, so that he may uncover to them what was covered of their shame; and said, "Your Lord has not prohibited this tree for you, but to avoid your becoming angels or your becoming eternal."

[20] And he swore on oaths, "I am one of your well-wishers." [21] So he cast them down by deception. So, when they tasted (the fruit of) the tree, their shame became apparent to them, and they began to patch together upon themselves some leaves of Paradise, and

their Lord called them, "Did I not forbid you from that tree, and did I not tell you that the Satan is an open enemy for you?" [22]

They said, "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and do not bless us with mercy, we shall, indeed, be among the losers." [23]

He said, "Go down, some of you enemies of some; and for you on the earth there will be a dwelling place and enjoyment for a time." [24] (Further) He said, "There you shall live and there you shall die and from there you shall be taken out." [25]

Commentary

The story of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام and Iblīs mentioned in the present verses has appeared in the fourth section of Sūrah Al-Baqarah. Detailed comments have been given in the Tafsīr of that Sūrah. If needed, please see Ma'ariful-Qurān, English Translation, Volume I, Pages 170-187.

Verses 26 - 27

يٰۤاَيُّهَا اٰدَمُ قَدْ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ لِبَاسًا يُّوَارِي سَوْآتِكَمْ وَرِيشًا
وَلِبَاسَ التَّقْوٰى ۚ ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اٰيَةِ اللّٰهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُوْنَ
﴿٢٦﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا اٰدَمُ لَا يَفْتِنَنَّكَ الشَّيْطٰنُ كَمَا اَخْرَجَ اٰبَوَيْكَم مِّنَ
الْجَنَّةِ يَنْزِعُ عَنْهُمَا لِبَاسَهُمَا لِيُرِيَهُمَا سَوْاَتِهِمَا ۗ اِنَّهٗ يَرٰكُمْ
هُوَ وَقَبِيْلُهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا تَرَوْنَهُمْ ۗ اِنَّا جَعَلْنَا الشَّيَاطِيْنَ اَوْلِيَا۟
لِّلَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾

O children of 'Ādam, We have sent down to you clothing that covers your shame and dress that adorns. And the dress of Taqwa! that is the best. That is one of the signs of Allah, so that they may be receptive to advice. [26]

O children of 'Ādam, "Do not let Satan put you in trouble the way he had your parents expelled from Paradise, having their dress removed from them, so that he could show them their shame. Indeed, he sees you - he and his company - from where you do not see them.

Surely, We have made the satans friends for those who do not believe. [27]

Commentary

Mentioned in almost a section preceding the verses cited above was the event relating to Sayyidnā 'Ādam and Satan, the accursed. The first outcome of the satanic instigation was that the heavenly apparel of 'Ādam and Ḥawwā عليهم السلام came off leaving them coverless as a result of which they began hiding their coverable body with leaves.

In the first of the present verses (26), Allah Ta'ālā has addressed all children of 'Ādam and told them that the dress they wear is a great blessing the worth and value of which must be recognized by them. The address here is not to Muslims alone. It is to all children of Adam. This is a sharp pointer to the fact that the act of covering the coverable parts of the body and the wearing of dress is both a human need and a natural desire. Everyone abides by it without any distinction of religion or community. Then, giving its details, three kinds of clothings were mentioned.

First of all, it was said: لِبَاسًا يُوَارِي سَوْآتِكُمْ (clothing that covers your shame). Here, the word: يُوَارِي (yuwārī) is a derivation from: مُوَارَاتٍ (muwārāt) which means to cover, hide or conceal. And the word: سَوَاءٍ (sau'āt) is the plural form of: سَوْءٌ (sau'ah). This is applied to body parts the uncovering of which is taken, by nature, as bad and shameful by all human beings. The sense of the statement is that Allah has sent down for people dress with which they could cover their body parts the exposing of which is a matter of shame.

After that, it was said: وَرِيشًا (wa rishā). The dress one uses for adornment and decency is called: رِيش (Rish). The meaning is that just to cover up the cover-worthy body parts, even a simple set of clothing is enough. But, Allah has provided for you much more than simply clothing, He blessed you with dresses which make you look handsome, or decent, neat and civilized.

At this place, the word used by the Holy Qur'an is: أَنْزَلْنَا (anzalnā: We have sent down). It means to bestow or bless with. It is not necessary that it be sent down from the heavens ready to wear. This is like another expression: أَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيدَ (57:25). It means: 'We sent down the iron,'

which is dug out of the earth as everyone can see. However, at both these places, by saying: **أَنزَلْنَاهُ** (*anzalnā* : We have sent down), it was indicated that the way no human planning or artifice operates as active agent in what 'descends from the heavens,' so it is with the essential mother element of dress, cotton or wool etc., where human ingenuity has no role to play. That is simply a gift from the great creative power of Allah Ta'ālā. But, human artifice does work in efforts to make out of these materials dresses to individual taste, temperament, and the need to stay safe against heat or chill. Even the way to that artifice is shown by Allah Ta'ālā. Therefore, eyes that see reality see all this as nothing but Divine gift sent from the heavens.

Two Uses of Dress

Identified here are two uses of dress: (1) To cover the cover-worthy parts of the body (*satr*), and (2) protection from hot and cold weather, and decor of the body. The first use has been placed first which indicates that the real purpose of human dress is to be able to cover the cover-worthy parts of the body (*satr al-'awrah*). This also happens to be its line of demarcation from animals. The dress given to animals has been naturally made a part of their body. The purpose it serves is either to protect from hot and cold weather, or beautify them. No elaborate arrangements have been made to cover up their *satr*. Nevertheless, formations of particular body parts in their bodies have been so placed that they do not remain totally exposed. Some would have a screen of a tail and many others would have other obstructors of view.

After having related the event concerning 'Ādam and Ḥawwā' ('Ādam and Eve) and how the Satan had instigated them, this mention of dress indicates that for human beings to be naked, or the exposure of their shame before others is a sign of abject disgrace and indecency at its worst. Moreover, it is an antecedent to all sorts of evils and disorders.

The Modern Obsession for Nudity: The Tempter of 'Ādam and Eve still Stalks

So, the first attack of Satan came from this opening against human beings when their dress dropped off from where it belonged. Even today, when Satan wishes to confuse and waylay human beings through his accomplices, it always picks up a chic front like being trendy, hip,

hot or cool and ends up pulling people out from homes into streets and alleys naked or just about. It would seem that what Satan has classified as modern advancement does not happen unless women are deprived of their sense of shame and modesty and made to parade around in the near-nude.

After 'Īmān, the First Duty is to Cover your Body Properly

When Shayṭān, sensing this weakness in human beings, made the first assault on their body cover, the Shari'ah of Islam acted smartly as it is responsible for the inculcation, protection and flowering of every good in its people that it took the issue so seriously that it enjoined the covering of human body as the first duty after 'Īmān or faith. The Ṣalāh, the Ṣawm, and duties like those come after that.

Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'ẓam رضى الله عنه says that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: When someone wears a new dress, he should recite the following Du'ā while wearing it:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي كَسَانِي مَا أُوَارِي بِهِ عَوْرَتِي وَأَتَجَمَّلُ بِهِ فِي حَيَاتِي

Praise be to Allah who gave me clothes with which I am to cover the cover-worthy parts of my body and look handsome with it in my life.

The Great Reward of Giving the Old Dress as Ṣadaqah after Wearing the New One

He also said: If a person who wears a new dress and gives away the old one as Ṣadaqah (charity) to anyone poor and needy, he comes under the protection and patronage of Allah Ta'ālā in all states of his life and death. (Ibn Kathīr from the Musnad of Aḥmad)

In this Ḥadīth too, one is reminded of the two considerations in wearing a dress which is why Allah Ta'ālā has created the human dress.

Covering of Body is Natural and the Theory of Evolution is False

The event of Sayyidnā 'Ādam and the statement of the Qur'ān make it clear that covering the body and using a dress is a natural desire and an inborn necessity of human beings which has been with them since the very beginning. Those who profess that the first man

went around naked and it was only after having passed through stages of evolution that he invented the dress, they are patently false.

The Ultimate Dress

After having identified the dress of two kinds, that which covers the body properly and that which gives comfort and beauty, a third kind of dress was mentioned by saying: وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ (And the dress of Taqwā [fear of Allah]! that is the best). In some readings (*Qira'at*) of the Qur'ān, the word: لباس (*libās*: dress) has been rendered with a *fathah* on the letter: سِين (*sīn*) as: لِبَاسُ التَّقْوَىٰ. Thus, read with: أَنْزَلْنَا (*anzalnā*), it will mean: We have sent down a third dress of Taqwā. But, in accordance with the well-known reading of it, it means that everyone knows the two dresses mentioned, however, there is a third kind of dress, that of Taqwā - and that is the best of all dresses. The dress of Taqwā, as explained by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and 'Urwah ibn Zubayr رضى الله عنهم اجمعين, means right conduct, good deed and fear of Allah. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

The sense is that the way the visible physical dress of human beings serves the purpose of covering the cover-worthy parts of the body, protecting from hot and cold weather and giving beauty and embellishment - very similarly, there is a spiritual dress, that of right and becoming conduct, good deed and fear of Allah. This *libās* or dress of Taqwā conceals human weaknesses and moral shortcomings. It delivers one from immediate hardships and ultimate losses. Therefore, it is the best of dresses one can wear.

Present here is the hint that an evil-doing person who has no fear of Allah and does not care for acting right, must be disgraced ultimately, no matter how he covers up - as reported by Ibn Jarīr from Sayyidnā 'Uthmān al-Ghanī رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: By Allah in whose hands rests the life of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم, whatever a person does in secret, Allah Ta'ālā wraps his deed like a sheet around him and announces it - the good of it, if the deed is good, and the evil of it, if the deed is evil. Wrapping like a sheet on the body means that it is visible to everyone. No matter how secretly one may do something, Allah Ta'ālā makes its effects become evident on the face and the body. Then, to authenticate his statement, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم recited this verse: وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوَىٰ، ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ أَيْتِ اللَّهِ (... and dress that adorns. And the dress of Taqwā, that is the best.

That is one of the signs of Allah).

The Real Purpose of Physical Dress Too is to Achieve Taqwā

The expression, 'Dress of Taqwā,' indicates that the purpose of physical dress which fulfills the function of covering the body properly, and helps beautify it as well, is really a way of achieving the ability to fear Allah, or Taqwā as in the Qur'ān. This ability should manifest itself in the way one dresses. The parts of the body which must be covered should be fully covered. It should be ensured that one's modesty stays concealed. Neither should it be allowed to remain naked, nor should the dress on the body be so tight-fitting through which body parts look like being naked. Then, this dress should not have the flair of pride and arrogance, instead, it should reflect modesty and humility. Then, it should not be extravagant either. The cloth material used should be tailored to need. And neither should the dress for women be masculine, nor the dress for men be feminine, which is odious and repugnant in the sight of Allah. Also, there should be no imitation in wearing a dress like others which is a sign of deviation from the established norms of one's community.

Along with it, there is the crucial need to correct one's morals and deeds which is the real purpose of dress. At the end of the verse comes the invitation to understand: ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اٰیٰتِ اللّٰهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُوْنَ (That is one of the signs of Allah, so that they may be receptive to advice).

In the second verse (27), the address reverts to all children of Adam and the admonition given is that they should keep guarding against the deception of Shayṭān in everything they do under whatever circumstance they are - lest, Shayṭān puts them on another trial as he did with their parents, 'Ādam and Eve. He made them leave Paradise, caused them to shed their dress and render their essential cover to be uncovered. He was their eternal enemy. His enmity was something, they were never to lose sight of.

At the end of the verse, it was said:

اِنَّهٗ يَرٰكُمْ هُوَ وَفَصَّلُہٗ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا تَرَوْنَهُمْ اِنَّا جَعَلْنَا الشَّيَاطِیْنَ اَوْلِیَآءَ لِلَّذِیْنَ لَا یُؤْمِنُوْنَ

Indeed, he sees you - he and his company - from where you do not see them. Surely, We have made the satans friends for

those who do not believe - (27).

Here, the word: قَبِيلٌ (*qabīl*) means company or group. A joined family group is called: Qabīlah or tribe. Common groups are known as *qabīl*. The sense of the verse is: For you the Satan is a kind of enemy that he and his accomplices do see you but you do not see them. Therefore, the chances that you would fall a victim to their deception are fairly strong.

But, in other verses, it has also been clarified that people who keep turning to Allah Ta'ālā and maintain their guard against the deception of Shayṭān, for them, the wily web of Shayṭān is much too weak.

Then, what has been said at the end of this verse - that 'We have made the satans friends and guardians of those who do not believe' - also indicates that those who believe should not find staying away from their web of deception at all difficult.

Some righteous elders have said that the defence against the enemy who sees us but we cannot see him is simple. Let us come under the protection of Allah Ta'ālā. He sees these satans, watches how they move and act - but they cannot see Him.

And the statement, that human beings cannot see Shayṭān, is in terms of general conditions and habit. If a human being were to see them contra-habitually, that would not be considered contrary to it - as is the case of Jinns coming to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who asked questions and embraced Islam, which appears in authentic narrations of Ḥadīth. (Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Verses 28 - 31

وَإِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً قَالُوا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهَا آبَاءَنَا وَاللَّهُ أَمَرَنَا بِهَا ۚ قُلْ إِنْ كَانَ اللَّهُ لَا يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ أَتَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾ قُلْ أَمَرَ رَبِّي بِالْقِسْطِ وَأَقِيمُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ عِندَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَادْعُوهُ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ ۚ كَمَا بَدَأَكُمْ تَعُودُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾ فَرِيقًا هَدَىٰ وَفَرِيقًا حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الضَّلَالَةُ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ اتَّخَذُوا الشَّيَاطِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ

مُهْتَدُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾ يَبْنِيْ اٰدَمَ خُذُوْا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ
وَكُلُوْا وَاشْرَبُوْا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوْاۚ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾

And when they do something shameful, they say, "We have found our fathers doing it, and Allah has bidden us to do so." Say, "Allah never bids anything shameful. Do you say about Allah what you do not know?" [28]

Say, "My Lord has bidden me to do justice." And yourselves be aright at each occasion of prostration, and pray to Him with pure faith in Him. As He originated you, so you will return. [29] Some He led to guidance, and others had misguidance as their destiny. Indeed, they have taken the satans as their friends, instead of Allah, and they think that they are on the right path. [30]

O children of 'Adam, take along what looks good on you to every mosque. And eat and drink and do not be extravagant. Surely, He does not like the extravagant. [31]

Commentary

Before Islam, one of the many shameful and absurd customs Shay-tān had made the people of 'Arab Jāhiliyyah follow was that no one, other than the Quraysh, could make the Ṭawāf of Ka'bah in one's own clothes. Instead of that, the requirement was to borrow a dress from a Qurayshi, otherwise, make the Ṭawāf naked.

As obvious, the Quraysh could not provide clothes to the whole people of Arabia, therefore, the consequence was that these people would make Ṭawāf mostly naked, men and women, both, with women usually doing their Ṭawāf in the darkness of the night. Then, they would explain the satanic expediency of this act by saying: 'The clothes wearing which we have committed sins are clothes in which making the Ṭawāf of the Ka'bah is contrary to etiquette (so devoid of commonsense they were that it did not occur to them that making their Ṭawāf naked was far more contrary to etiquette, and still more so, contrary to human dignity itself) and the only exception to this rule was the tribe of Quraysh which, because they were the servants of the sacred Ḥaram, was not bound to follow this law of nudity.'

The first verse among those cited above has been revealed to identify and eliminate this absurd custom. It was said in the verse that on occasions when they did something shameful and people told them not to do so, their answer to them would be that their forefathers and elders have been doing so all along, and now for them, to forsake their practice was a matter of shame. Then, they also said that this was what Allah had told them to do. (Ibn Kathīr)

In this verse, '*al-faḥshā*,' according to most commentators means this very naked Ṭawāf. In fact, *fuḥsh*, *faḥshā* and *fāḥishah* refer to every evil act the evil of which reaches the farthest limits and is all too loud and clear in terms of commonsense and sound taste (Maḥzarī). Then, that its good and bad becomes quite rational too, is something which stands established universally. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Then, come the two arguments they advanced in support of the continuance of this absurd custom. One of these was the need to follow ancestral customs, that is, maintaining these was good in itself. The answer to this proposition was fairly clear as the blind following of ancestral customs was not something reasonable. Even a person of average commonsense can understand that a method cannot be justified on the basis that one's forefathers used to do so. If the methods used by forefathers were to be taken to be sufficient to justify the legitimacy of an action, then, the fact is that forefathers of different peoples of the world used to act differently, even contradictorily. This argument will, then, render all erroneous methods of the whole world to be correct and permissible. In short, this argument advanced by these ignorant people did not deserve attention. Therefore, the Qur'ān has not considered it necessary to answer this question here. Though, in some Ḥadīth narrations, it has been answered by saying that an act of ignorance which may have been committed by one's forefathers could hardly be worth following by any stretch of imagination.

The second argument in favour of their naked Ṭawāf advanced by these people was that Allah had ordered them to do so. This was a flagrant lie. They were attributing to Allah what He had never commanded. Addressing the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the answer given was: *قُلْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ* (Allah never bids anything shameful) - because commanding people to do something like that is against His wisdom

and counter to His state of being the Purest of the pure. Then, taken to task was their false and untrue attribution to Allah. They were warned with the words: أَتَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (Do you say about Allah what you do not know?). It means that they were attributing a falsity to Allah without having an evidence in support; and it is obvious that attributing something to someone without proper investigation and authority is an act of rank effrontery and patent injustice. Then if done in the case of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu*, reporting anything so will be a crime and injustice the magnitude of which cannot be imagined. At this point, let it be understood clearly that the respected Mujtahid Imāms, when they deduce, formulate and describe injunctions which appear in the verses of the Qur'ān through *Ijtihād*, that effort does not fall under the purview of this verse. The reason is that their deduction is a process which operates under the justification of the very words and meanings of the Qur'ān.

Said in the second verse was: قُلْ أَمَرَ رَبِّي بِالْقِسْطِ (Say, "My Lord has bidden me to do justice). Here, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to tell those ignorant people, who were falsely attributing the justification of their naked *Tawāf* towards Allah, that Allah always commands justice. The word used here is: الْقِسْطُ (*al-qist*) which essentially means justice, balance and moderation. At this place, 'al-qist' refers to a conduct which is free of excess or deficiency, that is, which neither falls short, nor exceeds the appointed limits - as is the case with all injunctions of the Shari'ah. Therefore, under this sense of 'al-qist' included there are all acts of worship and obedience as well as all general injunctions of the Shari'ah. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

After having stated the command of justice and moderation, two injunctions of the Shari'ah relevant to their erroneous conduct have been particularly mentioned. These are: أَقِيمُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ (and yourself be aright at each occasion of prostration) and: وَادْعُوهُ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ (and pray to Him with pure faith in Him). The first command relates to what one does physically and outwardly. The other belongs to the heart, the spiritual dimension. In the first injunction, the word: مَسْجِدٍ (*masjid*), according to most commentators, appears in the sense of prostration (*sajdah*, *sujūd* or *ṭibādah*) and it means that one should be aright at the time of every *Ṣalāh* or any other act of worship. It could also mean that one should make an effort and be particular to keep

one's orientation straight towards the Qiblah. And being aright or keeping the orientation straight could also mean that one should subordinate everything one says or does to what Allah has commanded, maintaining an orientation and stance that never varies, never dwindles and moves elsewhere. Given this meaning, this injunction will not remain particular for Ṣalāh only - instead, it would comprehend all acts of worship, dealings and transactions.

The second injunction means that one should worship Allah, purely and exclusively, without associating in that act anyone else in any capacity, even to the limit that such worship should also be free from, and untainted with, what is known as al-Shirk al-Khafiyy (concealed Shirk of associating others with the Divinity of Allah), that is, hypocrisy and *riyāʿ* (show off).

By mentioning both injunctions together, the indication being given could be that one must correct, align and synchronize both dimensions of one's person, the outward and the inward, the physical and the spiritual, with the injunctions of the Shari'ah. Not enough is obvious obedience (*Iṭa'ah*) without sincerity (*Ikhhlās*), nor can simple sincerity of the heart become sufficient without following the Shari'ah as visible outwardly too. Instead of that, it is binding on everyone that one should correct and align one's outward bearings in accordance with the Shari'ah and never forget to keep his or her inward state of being too reserved for Allah Ta'alā alone. This helps us see the error (dichotomy) of those who take Shari'ah (the outward or physical adherence to faith) and Ṭariqah (the inward or spiritual adherence to faith) as two different ways to approach religion. Some of them would even presume that it was sufficient to correct one's inward dimension as shown by Ṭariqah - even if they go about doing what is contrary to the Shari'ah! This is a gaping error.

At the end of the verse (29), it was said: كَمَا بَدَأَكُمْ تَعُودُونَ (As He originated you, so you will return). It means that it was He who created you first and it will be He who will make you rise again on the day of *Qiyāmah*. For His perfect power, this was not difficult at all. Perhaps to indicate this element of convenience what was said here is: تَعُودُونَ (*ta'udūn*: you will return) and not: نَعْمِدُكُمْ (We shall make you rise) since making to rise again requires not much action. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

There is an additional benefit of introducing this sentence here. It helps one in abiding by the injunctions of the Shari'ah - because it is the realization that there is a life-to-come, and a Last Day, the Day of *Qiyāmah*, and reward or punishment for deeds, good or bad, which makes what is difficult easy, and what is painful bearable. Experience bears out that man is a tough customer. Unless one is under such gripping apprehension, no word of advice can make him do what is right, nor can the restriction of any law stop him from going into crimes.

In the third verse (30), it was said that there are people Allah has guided right while there are others who have provided the proof of their erroneous conduct, because they have, bypassing Allah, made satans their comrades, and they presume that they are on the right path.

The sense is that the guidance of Allah *Subḥānahu wa Ta'ālā* was open to all, but they turned away from it and started following satans, then, on top of it, they were led to think that their sickness was health, and their error, guidance.

This verse tells us that not knowing the injunctions of the Shari'ah is no valid excuse. If someone takes to a way of error thinking it to be correct with full sincerity, he will not be considered excusable in the sight of Allah. - because Allah has given everyone reason and common-sense to use it and distinguish the true from the false. Then, man was not left to rely on his reason alone. He sent prophets and books. They made the right and wrong and the true and false all too clear.

Now someone may doubt that a person who is acting in good faith, though in error, should not have any blame coming to him. He should be excused because he is not aware of his error. The answer is that Allah Ta'ālā has blessed human beings with reason and sense with the added benefit of the teachings of the noble prophets, may peace be upon them all. At least, through these, he should be able to compare his method and way with that suggested by them. There has to be some doubt or pinch or question in his mind. Now, his fault is that he did not pay any attention to what they taught and kept sticking to the way of error he had taken to.

However, a person who has striven his best in the quest of truth,

yet failed to find the right path and true teaching, may be found excusable in the sight of Allah - as Imām al-Ghazali has said in his book, *Al-Tafriqah Bayn al-Islam wa Al-zandaqah*. والله أعلم .

In the fourth verse (31), it was said: 'O children of 'Ādam, take along what looks good on you to every mosque. And eat and drink and do not be extravagant. Surely, He does not like the extravagant'. In the way the 'Arabs of Jāhiliyyah used to take the making of the Ṭawāf of the Ka'bah naked as the correct method of worship and an act of reverence for the House of Allah, they also had a custom that they would skip eating and drinking during the days of Ḥajj. They would eat no more than what would keep them alive. They particularly abstained from butter oil, milk and other pure eatables. (Ibn Jarīr)

The present verse was revealed against this absurd practice. It enjoined that they should abstain from it because making Ṭawāf naked was an act of immodesty and bad manners. Similarly, doing the reverse of it, that is, abstaining from good food given by Allah Ta'ālā without any valid excuse had hardly anything to do with religion. In fact, forbidding on themselves what Allah had made lawful for them was effrontery and excess in an act of worship, something disliked by Allah. Therefore, eat and drink as you wish during the days of Ḥajj, but do not be extravagant. Totally abstaining from Ḥalāl foods is also included under extravagance. Then, becoming heedless to the real objectives of Ḥajj and the Dhikr of Allah and remaining busy with nothing but eating and drinking is also included under extravagance.

Though this verse has been revealed to eradicate a particular custom of nudity in the 'Arab Jāhiliyyah which they demonstrated at the time of Ṭawāf in the name of reverence for the Ka'bah, but the Imāms of Tafsīr and the Jurists of Muslim Ummah unanimously agree that the revelation of an injunction in relation to a particular event does not mean that that injunction is restricted to the same event. Instead, what is considered here is the generality of words. The injunction, then, applies on everything that falls under the generality of these words.

Covering the Body Properly is Obligatory : There is No Ṣalāh Without it

Therefore, the majority of Ṣaḥābah and Ṭabī'īn, and the Mujtahid

Imāms, have deduced many injunctions from this verse. The most important of them is about Ṣalāh. As making Ṭawāf naked has been prohibited in this verse, the ruling applies identically to Ṣalāh as well which becomes Ḥarām (forbidden) and false and futile - because the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said in a Ḥadīth: *الطَّوَافُ بِالْبَيْتِ صَلَوةٌ* (The Ṭawāf of the House [of Allah] is Ṣalāh). In addition to that, since the majority of commentators agree that the word, 'masjid' in this verse itself means Sajdah (sujūd, prostration), the prohibition of nudity in the state of Sajdah becomes explicitly inclusive in this verse. Now, if this is prohibited in Sajdah, then, it will obviously stand prohibited in all other movements of Ṣalāh such as Rukū', Qiyām and Qu'ūd. Then, the statement of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم itself has made it more evident.

It also appears in Ḥadīth that the Ṣalāh of any adult woman is not permissible without proper head and body cover (khimār, ridā, chādar, dupatta or large scarf) (Tirmidhī).

That covering the body properly is obligatory in conditions other than Ṣalāh as well stands proved from other verses of the Qur'ān and the narrations of Ḥadīth - one such verse has already appeared a little earlier: *يَبْنِيْ اٰدَمَ قَدْ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُؤَارِيْ سَوْآتِكُمْ* 'We have sent down to you clothing that covers your shame - 26.'

To sum up, it can be said that covering the body properly is the first human and Islamic obligation on everyone which is mandatory under all conditions - and, in Ṣalāh and Ṭawāf, it is obligatory in the first degree.

A Good Dress For Ṣalāh

The verse brings out another rule of conduct. By calling dress: 'Zīnah,' (adornment), the hint given is that the preferred practice in Ṣalāh is that one should not limit himself to only covering his body functionally, but choose to wear what adorns, looks becoming - of course, within one's means. It was the habit of Sayyidnā Ḥasan رضى الله عنه that he would wear his best dress at the time of Ṣalāh saying: Allah Ta'ālā loves beauty, therefore, I dress myself beautifully to please my Lord for He has said: *خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ* (take along what looks good on you to every mosque).

So, we can see that this verse proves two things, that covering the body properly is obligatory in Ṣalāh, and that it is recommended and merit-worthy to wear a neat, clean and good dress, within means.

Ṣalāh and Dress : Some Rulings

The third problem at this place is about *Satr*, that is, the parts of the body to be concealed, concealing which is, under all conditions, and specially in Ṣalāh and Ṭawāf, an obligation (Fard) - so, what are its limits? The Qur'ān has given a command briefly - its details have been entrusted with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He explained it in details. He told us that the *Satr* of men is from the navel to the knees, and the *Satr* of women is the whole body except the face and both palms and feet, which are exempt.

All these details appear in Ḥadīth narrations. For men, if the body below the navel, or if the knees are open, then, such a dress is a sin in itself, and Ṣalāh too does not get to be performed in it as due and proper. Similarly, if the head, neck or arms or shin or calf of a woman are open, then, her being dressed like that is impermissible in itself, and Ṣalāh too does not get to be performed as due and proper. Says the Ḥadīth: 'A home in which there is a woman with her head uncovered, angels of good would not come there.'

That the face of a woman, her palms and feet which have been exempted from *Satr* (the parts of body covering and concealing which is obligatory) means that, should these be open during the Ṣalāh, it will cause no defect in Ṣalāh. It never means that a woman would be moving freely even before non-Maḥram men (marriage with whom is permissible) with her face open without a valid excuse as admitted by the Shari'ah of Islam.

As for this injunction, it is related to the obligation of covering the body properly (*Satr*) which is *sine qua non* for Ṣalāh - that is, it stands as if not performed at all. And since what is required in Ṣalāh is not the functional covering of the body alone, instead, the advice given is to wear a dress which looks good on one (*Zīnah*), therefore, for men to make Ṣalāh bare-headed, or doing it with shoulders or elbows open, is Makrūh (reprehensible or disliked) - whether the shirt itself be half-sleeved, or has been rolled up, the Ṣalāh remains Makruh after all. Similarly, Ṣalāh remains Makruh in a dress one would not prefer to

wear before friends, or in public, as something unbecoming - for example, wearing an undershirt alone - without a shirt, even if it has full sleeves; or, skipping the wearing of a cap and making do with some cloth piece or a tiny handkerchief knotted or tucked round the head. When no regular person would like to appear before friends or others in that head-bare state, how would that become desirable as a mode of appearance before Allah, the Master of all the worlds? That Ṣalāh is Makruh when offered with bare head, shoulders and elbows has been inferred from the word: زَيِّنَ (zīnah: what looks good) of this Qur'ānic verse, and also from the clarifications of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

To recapitulate, it can be said that the injunction in this verse was primarily revealed to eradicate the custom of nudity in pagan Arabia (the age of Jāhiliyyah), but the generality of its words yielded other injunctions and rulings as well. Similar is the case with the second sentence in the verse: كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا (Eat and drink and do not be extravagant). Though, this too was revealed to erase the custom of Arab Jāhiliyyah that they would take eating good food during the days of Ḥajj as sin, but, here too, the generality of words helps prove many injunctions and rulings.

Eating and Drinking as Needed is Obligatory

To begin with, eating and drinking is obligatory on everyone from the point of view of the Shari'ah as well. If anyone abandons eating and drinking despite having the ability to do so, to the limit that he dies, or becomes too weak even to fulfill what is obligatory on him, then, this person shall be sinning and committing a crime in the sight of Allah.

Legality Operates until Proved Otherwise

One ruling deduced from this verse, as specified by Al-Jaṣṣāṣ in his *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, is: Basically, all edibles are permissible and Ḥalāl (lawful) unless the unlawfulness or prohibition of something particular stands proved through an evidence of the Shari'ah. In its absence, everything will be considered permissible and lawful. This was suggested by the fact that the object of: كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا (Eat and drink) was not mentioned in the verse, that is, it did not specify what to eat or drink. The masters of Arabic diction have clearly established that not mentioning the object on such occasions is an indicator towards its

generality, that is, one can eat and drink everything, except things which have been declared to be Ḥarām (unlawful, impermissible, prohibited, forbidden). (Aḥkām Al-Qur'an by Al-Jaṣṣaṣ)

Extravagance in Eating and Drinking is Not Permissible

The last sentence of the verse: وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا (do not be extravagant) proves that eating and drinking is, no doubt, permissible - in fact, it is an order - but, along with it, being extravagant while doing so is prohibited. 'Isrāf' means to cross the limit. Then, the crossing of limits takes many forms. One of them is to cross the limits of Ḥalāl and land into the area of Ḥarām, that is, one starts eating and drinking things which are prohibited. That this is Ḥarām is all too obvious.

Another aspect is that one starts taking what Allah has made Ḥalāl and abstains from it as being Ḥarām without any valid legal excuse as admitted by the Shari'ah of Islam. It should be understood that the way it is a crime and sin to use what is Ḥarām, similarly, taking the Ḥalāl as Ḥarām is also a rebellion against Divine Law and a very grave sin. (Ibn Kathīr, Maṣḥabī & Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

On the same analogy, eating and drinking beyond the limits of hunger and need is also what Isrāf or extravagance is. It is for this reason that Muslim Jurists (*fuqahā*) have written that eating more than needed to remove hunger is not permissible (Aḥkām al-Qur'an and others). Then, it also falls under the ruling governing Isrāf or extravagance that one eats much less than needed, despite having the ability and choice, which makes him weak and unable to fulfill what is enjoined upon him. It was to forbid both these kinds of extravagance that the Qur'an has said:

إِنَّ الْمُبَذِّرِينَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيَاطِينِ

The extravagant are brothers of the satans - 17:27.

Then, in Sūrah Al-Furqān, it was said:

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَنْفَقُوا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوا وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ قَوَامًا

(True servants of Allah are) those who, when they spend, would not over-spend and under-spend and the moderate behavior is between that. - 25:67.

Moderation in Eating and Drinking is Always Beneficial

Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'ẓam رضى الله عنه said: 'Avoid eating and drinking too much because it spoils the body, generates diseases and slackens activity. Instead, take to moderation in eating and drinking for it is good for the health of the body, and is far removed from extravagance (*Israf*) in it.' He also said: 'Allah Ta'ālā does not like an obese 'Ālim' (that is, a scholar of religion who has become fat and heavy as a result of eating excessively by choice). Then, he further said: 'A person does not get destroyed until he starts preferring his personal desires over his Faith.' (Rūḥ A-Ma'ānī from Abū Nu'aym)

Righteous elders of the early period have said that to keep busy with the business of eating and drinking all the time, or to prefer it over other matters of importance giving the impression that one has no other worthy purpose left in life but eating and drinking, is included under *Israf* (extravagance). Also well-known is their saying that one should eat to live, not live to eat.

In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has included the attitude of compulsively satiating every desire as and when it emerges as included under *Israf* (extravagance). The words of the Ḥadīth are: إِنَّ مِنْ الْإِسْرَافِ أَنْ تَأْكُلَ كُلَّ مَا اسْتَهَيْتَ (It is also an *Israf* that one eats everything one desires). (Ibn Mājah from Sayyidnā Anas)

As reported by Al-Baihaqī, The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم once saw Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها eating twice on a day and he said: 'Yā 'Ā'ishah, would you like that eating becomes your only pastime?'

And this command for moderation in eating and drinking mentioned in this verse is not restricted to eating and drinking alone. The truth of the matter is that the course of moderation is very desirable in wearing what one wears and living where one lives, in almost everything. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه said: Eat and drink what you wish and wear what you like. But, take care of two things: One, that there be no *Israf* (excess from the measure of need) in it. Two, that there be no pride and arrogance about it.

Eight Rulings from One Āyah

In short, eight rulings of the Shari'ah come out from the statement: كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا (Eat and drink and do not be extravagant): (1) Eating

and drinking is obligatory as needed, (2) unless the unlawfulness of something stands proved as based on an evidence admitted by the Shari'ah, everything is Halāl, (3) the use of things prohibited by Allah and His Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم is Isrāf and is impermissible, (4) taking as Hārām what Allah has made Halāl is also Isrāf, and a grave sin, (5) once one has eaten his fill, eating anymore is impermissible, (6) eating so little that one becomes weak and is rendered unable to fulfill his obligations is also Isrāf, (7) to keep thinking of eating and drinking all the time is also Isrāf and (8) It is not necessary that one must have what one wishes for at a given time.

The rules recounted above which emerge from this verse have their religious benefits. If one looks at it medically, a better prescription for health and well-being will be difficult to find. The key is: Moderation in eating and drinking. That is your sanctuary from all diseases.

According to Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī and Maḥzarī, Khalīfah Harūn Al-Rashīd had a personal physician who was a Christian. He said to 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn ibn al-Wāqidi: 'Your Book (the Qur'ān) has nothing about medicine in it, although there are only two fields of knowledge in our time, the knowledge of religion and the knowledge of bodies called Medicine.' 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn said: Allah Ta'ālā has put the whole science of medicine in half a verse of the Qur'ān. He says: كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا (Eat and drink and do not be extravagant) (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr reports this saying also with reference to some other righteous elders of the earlier times). Then, the Court physician asked: All right, is there something in the sayings of your prophet about Medicine?' 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn replied: 'The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has reduced the whole science of medicine in a few sayings of his when he said that 'the stomach is the nursery of diseases' and 'abstinence from harmful things is the root of all medicine' and 'give every body what it can take (as a matter of habit)' (Kashshāf & Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī). After hearing this, the Christian physician said: 'Your Book and your Prophet have left no Medicine for Galen (Jālinūs).'

Based on a narration from Sayyidnā Abi Hurairah رضى الله عنه in Shu'ab al-Īmān, Al-Baihaqī has reported that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'The stomach is the reservoir of the body. All arteries and nerves of the body get satiated from this reservoir. If the stomach is in

proper order, all veins will return with healthy food from here. And if it is not in proper order, all veins will spread out in the body as carriers of diseases.'

Muhaddithīn (experts in the discipline of Ḥadīth) have expressed doubts about the use of some words in these narrations of Ḥadīth. But, all of them agree to the emphasis laid on eating moderately and observing precaution present in countless Ḥadīth. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Verses 32 - 34

قُلْ مَنْ حَرَّمَ زِينَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي أَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهِ وَالطَّيِّبَاتِ مِنَ
الرِّزْقِ قُلْ هِيَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا خَالِصَةٌ يَوْمَ
الْقِيَمَةِ كَذَلِكَ نَفْصَلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾ قُلْ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ
رَبِّي الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ وَالْإِثْمَ وَالْبَغْيَ
بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَأَنْ تُشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزَّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا
عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ
أَجَلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

Say, "Who has prohibited the adornment Allah has brought forth for His servants, and the wholesome things of sustenance?"

Say, "They are for the believers during this worldly life (though shared by others), while they are purely for them on the day of Resurrection. This is how We elaborate the verses for people who understand." [32]

Say, "My Lord has prohibited only the shameful things, what is apparent from them and what is hidden, and sin and unjust aggression, and that you associate with Allah something for which He has not sent any authority, and that you say about Allah what you do not know.

[33]

And for every people there is an appointed time. So, when their appointed time comes, they will not be late for a moment, nor will they go before. [34]

Commentary

Warned in the first verse are those who practice excess in acts of worship and introduce self-invented restrictions into it. They would abstain from things made Ḥalāl by Allah Ta'ālā and go on to make them Ḥarām on them and call it an act of obedience to and worship of Allah - as was the case of the disbelievers of Makkah who just did not consider wearing clothes in Ṭawāf during the days of Hajj as permissible and who used to think of abstinence from good food made lawful by Allah Ta'ālā to be an act of worship.

Such people have been sternly reprimanded in a chastising mode by inquiring as to who has made good and becoming dress created by Allah for his servants and the good and pure foods bestowed by Him Ḥarām for people?

Abstinence from Good Dress and Tasty Food is No Teaching of Islam

It means that to determine and declare something to be Ḥalāl or Ḥarām is the sole right of the Most Sacred Being that has created it. No one is permitted to interfere in this matter. Therefore, those who consider good dress and good food made lawful by Allah as something Ḥarām for themselves deserve the wrath and punishment from Allah. Living in tattered rags despite having the means is no teaching of Islam, nor is it something considered worth emulation in Islam as some ignorant people think.

Many among the early righteous elders and juristic Imāms of Islam whom Allah had been blessed with good means would often times wear elegant, even expensive dresses. Our own master, may the blessing of Allah and peace be upon him, when his means allowed it, has adorned his body with the best of dresses. According to one narration, once when he came out, there was on his blessed body a Ridā' the price of which was one thousand dirhams. As reported by Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, he had used a Ridā' worth four hundred guineas. Similarly, Imām Mālik always used decent and elegant dress. For him, someone had taken it on himself that he would provide three hundred and sixty pairs of dresses annually for his use. And a pair which adorned his body for a day would not be used again because after having been worn for one day, he would give this dress to some poor student.

The reason is that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: When Allah Ta'ālā blesses a servant of His with extended means, He likes to see the effect of His blessing on things around him, his dress being one of them. Therefore, to let such blessing become visible is also a form of showing gratitude. In contrast, there is the attitude of wearing worn-out or untidy clothes, despite having the means, which is ingratitude.

However, it is necessary to guard against two things, that is, from hypocrisy and exhibitionism, and from pride and arrogance. It means that one should not dress well simply to show off before others or to establish that they were superior or special as compared to them. And it is obvious that the righteous elders of the early period were free from such attitudes.

As for the reported use of ordinary or patched dress by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'zam رضى الله عنه and some other Ṣaḥābah among the righteous elders is concerned, it had two reasons. First of all, whatever came in their hands as their income, they would spend it out over the poor and the needy, and in the pursuit of their religious objectives. For their own person, they would be left with too little to afford a nice dress. Then, they were leaders of people. They let themselves be in that simple and inexpensive bearing as it was so that others with extended means would get the message, and that common people and the poor and needy are not overwhelmed by their financial status.

The same thing holds valid in the case of the noble Ṣūfis (the group of rightly guided mystics in Islam who lay primary stress on spiritual purification). When they make new aspirants abstain from fine dresses and tasty foods, they really do not intend to say that leaving these things off for good is an act of *thawāb* or merit. Far from it. Instead of that, it is only to put the brakes on the wanton desires of the human self during the initial stage of the quest for truth that they would prescribe such regimen of striving, as treatment and medicine. When the aspirant reaches a stage where he has learnt to control the desires of his self and it can no more be attracted to and snared by what is Ḥarām and impermissible, then, at that time, all masters of the spiritual orders would use and recommend good dress and tasty foods like the general body of early righteous elders. When done at that time, these

fine blessings of human sustenance become for them the source of knowing their Creator and achieving nearness to Him - rather becoming impediments (through any lack of gratitude or triumph of desires as it is likely in the early stage).

The Sunnah of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in Food and Dress

About food and dress, the essential way of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the Ṣaḥabah and the Ṭabi'īn is that one should not be unnaturally concerned about these. Dress and food within easy access are good enough and should be used gratefully. If the dress is coarse and the food dry, there is no need to go to the trouble of finding something better one way or the other - even if one has to borrow, or that one starts worrying about what one misses so much that one lands himself into some other trouble.

Similarly, when good dress and food are naturally available, one should not go to the extreme trouble of spoiling them or avoiding their use. Thus, the way the seeking of good dress and good food is a self-imposed constraint, very similarly, doing the opposite of it, that is, to spoil what is good and to leave it aside in favour of what is bad, is also a self-imposed constraint - and a blameworthy one.

Why should this be done? The next sentence of the verse explains the wisdom behind it. It says that all blessings, which include fine dresses and nice foods, have really been created for obedient believers. Others are enjoying these because of them - because this world is the venue of deeds not the venue of rewards. You cannot draw a line of distinction between the genuine and the counterfeit, the good and the bad in the matter of blessings available in this mortal world. Here, the feast is open to all. The blessings are there from the All-Merciful. He is Al-Raḥmān for this whole world. But, the arrangements in this world obey the will of Allah - and the customary practice of Allah in this world is: When the obedient believers in Allah fall short in their duties to Him, other people overcome them, grab the treasures of worldly blessings and, as a result, the believing servants of Allah become subjected to hunger and poverty.

But, this law operates within this mortal world of deeds only. Once in the Hereafter, all blessings and comforts shall be reserved for the

obedient servants of Allah. This is what the sentence: قُلْ هِيَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا خَالِصَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ in this verse means, that is, '(O prophet) you tell them that all blessings in the worldly life itself are really the right of the believers - and, on the day of *Qiyamah*, they shall be theirs exclusively.'

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه has explained this verse by saying that all blessings and comforts of the world are - subject to the safeguard that they do not become a source of trouble for them in the Hereafter - are the rightful share of obedient believers only. Contrary is the case of disbelievers and sinners who, though they too receive these blessing in their mortal life, rather receive more of it, but these blessings of theirs are going to become their nemesis in the Hereafter bringing punishment which will last for ever. Therefore, as the outcome shows, this is not the kind of comfort and honour one would welcome.

Some other commentators have determined its meaning by saying that all blessings and comforts of the world are laced with ceaseless striving, the apprehension of decline and never-ending anxiety. Pure blessing and pure comfort simply do not exist here. However, whoever gets these blessings on the day of Judgement, they will have them in the state of absolute purity. There will be no striving for it, no apprehension of decline or loss in it, nor any worries after it. The three explanations of the sense of this sentence in this verse as given above could be accomodated therein and that is why commentators among the Ṣaḥabah and Tabi'īn have gone by them.

At the end of the verse, it was said: كَذَلِكَ نَقُصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ (This is how We elaborate the verses for people who understand). This verse carries a refutation of the excessive deeds and ignorant views of people who suggested that Allah Ta'ālā is pleased with the practice of abandoning good dress and good food.

After that, the second verse takes up the description of some of the things declared unlawful by Allah Ta'ālā forsaking which really brings His pleasure. The hint given here is that these people were suffering from a twofold ignorance. On the one hand, they deprived themselves of the good things of life Allah had made lawful for them by denying to use them as if they were unlawful - and did so for no reason. Then, on

the other hand, there were things genuinely and really unlawful, things the use of which was to result in the wrath of Allah and the punishment of the Hereafter, these they embraced with both arms only to discover that they had embraced what was to be their undoing in the life-to-come. Thus, they were doubly deprived, deprived of the blessings they had in the mortal world and deprived of the blessings they had the chance of having in the Hereafter. After that, says the Qur'an:

إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَّنَ ۖ وَلَا اِثْمًا ۖ وَالْبَغْيَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ۚ وَأَنْ تُشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا ۚ وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

Say, "My Lord has prohibited only the shameful things, what is apparent from them and what is hidden, and sin and unjust aggression, and that you associate with Allah something for which He has not sent any authority, and that you say about Allah what you do not know - 33.

In the detail given above, the word: *إِثْمٌ* (*ithm* : sin) covers all sins which fall on one personally - and in: *بَغْيٌ* (*baghy* : injustice) included there are sins which relate to rights and dealings as concerning others. Then come Shirk, the associating of partners with Allah, and the forging of lies against Him. That they are grave sins is quite evident.

This particular detail was mentioned here also because it covers almost all kinds of prohibitions and sins - whether they pertained to belief or conduct, or were done personally, or related to rights of others which were usurped. This was done also because these people of the Jāhiliyyah were involved with all these crimes and prohibitions. Thus, exposed here was another demonstration of their ignorance which was that they would abstain from what was made lawful for them and would not even hesitate to use what was declared to be unlawful.

Unfortunately, it is a necessary outcome of excess (*ghuluww*) in religion and introduction of self-invented practices (*bid'āt*) in it that people who get involved with this type of activity become habitually heedless to the root of religion and its essential requirements. Therefore, the harm caused by excess in religion and innovation in established faith is twofold. First of all getting involved with such *Ghuluww* and *Bid'ah* is a sin in itself. Then, seen in contrast, far too grave is the very

deprivation from the true religion of Allah and the genuine way of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Refuge with Allah (from such a fate)!

The first and the second verse both mentioned two crimes committed by disbelievers. They took Ḥalāl as Ḥarām and made the Ḥarām become Ḥalāl for themselves by themselves. The third verse (34) describes their sad end and the punishment they would have in the Hereafter. It was said:

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجَلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْذِنُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ

(And for every people there is an appointed time. So, when their appointed time comes, they will not be late for a moment, nor will they go before).

In other words, what is being said here is that those committing excesses who, despite their contumacy, are basking in the sunshine of the blessings of Allah Ta'ālā, and do not seem to be anywhere close to being punished, they should not lose sight of the customary practice of Allah that He, in His infinite mercy, keeps granting a long leash to sinners so that they would somehow stop doing what they do. But, the term of this leash and the time of this respite stands determined in the ultimate knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā. When that time comes, it just comes - neither too late nor too soon. Thus, criminals are caught in punishment. At times, the punishment descends right here in this world - and if, the punishment does not visit them here, it waits to receive them soon after their death.

As for the appointed time not being late or early as stated in this verse, it is a manner of saying, something like saying to a salesperson in a store: What is your last price, more or less? It is obvious that the inquiry is for the lower price, not the higher. But, it is put there as a subordinate suffix. Similarly, the real objective here is to state that there will be no delay after the appointed time. The mention of 'before' along with 'late' makes it closer to common comprehension.

Verses 35 - 39

يَبْنِيْ اِدَمَ اِمًا يٰۤاَتَيْنٰكُمْ رُّسُلًا مِّنْكُمْ يَقْصُّوْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ اٰتِيَّ ۙ فَمَنِ اتَّقٰى وَاَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ

كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا عَنْهَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا
خَالِدُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾ فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ
بِآيَاتِهِ ۖ أُولَٰئِكَ يَنَالُهُمْ نَصِيبُهُمْ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ تَهُمْ
رُسُلُنَا يَتَوَفَّوْنَهُمْ قَالُوا أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ قَالُوا
ضَلُّوا عَنَّا وَشَهِدُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا كَافِرِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾ قَالَ
ادْخُلُوا فِي آتَمٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ فِي النَّارِ ۖ
كُلَّمَا دَخَلَتْ أُمَّةٌ لَعَنَتْ أُخْتَهَا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا آذَرَكُوا فِيهَا جَمِيعًا
قَالَتْ أُخْرَاهُمْ لِأُولِهِمْ رَبَّنَا هَٰؤُلَاءِ أَضَلُّونَا فَأَنبِهِمْ عَذَابًا ضِعْفًا
مِّنَ النَّارِ ۚ قَالَ لِكُلِّ ضِعْفٌ وَلَٰكِنْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَقَالَتْ
أُولَهُمْ لِأُخْرَاهُمْ فَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ فَضْلٍ فذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ
بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

O children of 'Adam, if messengers from among you come to you narrating My verses before you, then, whoever fears Allah and corrects (himself), for them there shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. [35]

And those who belie Our verses and stand arrogant against them - those are the people of the Fire. There they shall live for ever. [36]

So, who is more unjust than the one who coins a lie against Allah or belies His signs? They shall receive their share from what is written until when Our messengers shall come to them to take their souls, they shall say, "Where is that which you used to call besides Allah?" They will say, "They are lost to us" and they shall testify against themselves that they were disbelievers. [37]

He (Allah) will say, "Enter the Fire with peoples who passed before you, the Jinn and the human beings." Whenever a people enter, they will curse their fellows until when they shall gather there together, the last of them will say of the first of them, "Our Lord, they

misguided us; so, give them a double punishment of the Fire." He will say, "For each there is a double, but you do not know." [38] And the first of them will say to the last of them, "So you have no superiority over us. Now, taste the punishment for what you have been earning."

[39]

Verses 40 - 43

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا عَنْهَا لَا تُفَتَّحُ لَهُمْ أَبْوَابُ السَّمَاءِ وَلَا يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتَّى يَلِجَ الْجَمَلُ فِي سَمِّ الْخِيَاطِ ۖ وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾ لَهُمْ مِّنْ جَهَنَّمَ مِهَادٌ وَمِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ غَوَاشٍ ۖ وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤١﴾ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِمْ مِّنْ غِلٍّ تَجْرَى مِنْ تَحْتِهِمُ الْأَنْهَارُ وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي هَدَانَا لِهَٰذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لِنَهْتَدِيَ لَوْلَا أَنَّ هَدَانَا اللَّهُ لَقَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُ رَبِّنَا بِالْحَقِّ ۖ وَنُودُوا أَنْ تِلْكَ الْجَنَّةُ الَّتِي أُورِثْتُمُوهَا بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

Surely, those who have belied Our signs and stood arrogant against them, the gates of the heavens shall not be opened for them, and they shall not enter the Paradise unless a camel enters into the eye of a needle. And this is how We recompense the sinners. [40] For them there is a bed from the Jahannam, and over them there are coverings. And this is how We recompense the transgressors. [41]

And those who believe and do good deeds - Allah does not obligate anyone beyond his capacity - they are the people of Paradise; they shall remain there for ever. [42] And We will remove whatever of malice they had in their hearts. Rivers will flow beneath them. And they will say, "All praise to Allah who has led us unto this. And we were not to find the way, had Allah not guided us, surely, the messengers of our Lord came with

truth." And they will be given a call, "Here is the Paradise. This you have been made to inherit for the deeds you have been doing." [43]

Commentary

Mentioned first in the set of verses cited above (35-37) is a pledge taken from every human being in the world of spirits, before being born into the material world. The pledge envisaged that they would, when the prophets of Allah come to them with Divine guidance and injunctions, listen to them in earnest and act accordingly. They were also told that those who abide by the pledge and fulfill what it entails, will have their salvation from sorrows and deserve eternal peace and comfort. And conversely, those who belie prophets or rebel against injunctions they bring shall have the eternal punishment of Jahannam waiting for them. The later set of verses presents what actually happened when different groups of human beings came into the world and started acting differently. Some of them threw the pledge behind their backs and settled to oppose it. Others held to it and acted righteously. The ultimate end of the two groups and the reward and punishment for them has been described in the later four verses (40-43).

Mentioned in verses 40 and 41 are deniers and criminals, and in verses 42 and 43, the believers and God-fearing who fulfilled the pledge.

In the first verse (40), it was said that those who belied the prophets of Allah and acted arrogantly against Divine guidance and 'Āyāt, for them, the gates of heaven will not be opened.

Reported in Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ is a Tafsīr of this verse from Sayyid-nā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه which says that the gates of heaven will be opened neither for them, nor for their prayers. It means that their prayer will not be answered and their deeds will be stopped from reaching the place where the deeds of the righteous servants of Allah are kept preserved, the name of which, according to the Qur'ān, is: **عِلِّيِّينَ** ('*Illiyīn*') (Sūrah Al-Mutaffifīn - 83:18-21). This subject has been referred to in yet another verse of the Qur'ān where it is said: **إِنِّي يَضَعُ الْقَوْلَ الطَّيِّبَ وَالْعَمَلَ** **الصَّالِحَ يَرْفَعُهُ**, that is, 'one's good words are taken to Allah Ta'ālā and one's good deed carries them' meaning that man's good deeds become the cause of Ṭayyib Kalimāt (good words) reaching Allah Ta'ālā.

In a narration from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and other Ṣaḥābah رضى الله عنهم اجمعين , the Tafsīr of the verse also says that the gates of heaven will not be opened for the spirits of deniers and disbelievers - and these spirits will be thrown down. This subject is supported by a Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Barā' ibn 'Āzib رضى الله عنه which has been reported in detail by Abū Dāwūd, Nasa'ī, Ibn Mājah and Imām Aḥmad, a summary of which is given below.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم went to a Janāzah of some Anṣarī Companion. The grave was not ready yet, so he sat down on an open spot. The Companions sat around him, silent. He raised his head and said: When the time of death comes for a believing servant of Allah, angels with white, radiant faces come from the heaven with the shroud and fragrance of the heaven and sit down in front of the person to die. Then, comes the angel of death, 'Izrā'īl عليه السلام and he addresses his Rūḥ (spirit, soul): O soul at peace, come out to receive the forgiveness and pleasure of your Rabb. Then, his Rūḥ comes out of the body, nice and easy, just like water coming out of a leather water-bag when opened. The angel of death receives his Rūḥ in his hands and entrusts it with the angels sitting there. These angels start moving out with the Rūḥ of the deceased. Wherever they meet a group of angels on their way, they are asked: Whose sacred Rūḥ is it? These angels introduce the Rūḥ of the deceased by his name and title with which he was known as a mark of respect in his life of the world. They tell him who he is, so and so, son of so and so. Then, comes the time when these angels reach the first heaven with the Rūḥ. They ask for the gate to be opened. The gate is opened. More angels join them from here until they reach as far as the seventh heaven. At that time, Allah Ta'ālā says: Write down the record of the deeds of this servant of Mine in the 'Ilīyyīn and then send him back. The Rūḥ returns to the grave again. In the grave come angels who keep the account of deeds. They make him sit up, and ask him: 'Who is your Rabb?' and 'what is your religion?' He says: Allah Ta'ālā is my Rabb and Islam is my religion. Then, comes the question: This pious person who has been sent for you - who is he? He says: He is the Rasūl of Allah Ta'ālā. Then comes a heavenly call: My servant is true. Roll out for him the carpet of Jannah. Dress him up in the apparel of Paradise. Open for him the door towards the Jannah. Through the door come the fragrance and breeze of Jannah

and his good deed transformed into a handsome presence comes near him to help him become familiar and rested in company.

In contrast, when the time of death comes for disbelievers and deniers, angels with dark and terrifying profile come from the heaven carrying a coarse piece of ragged rug and sit down in front of him. Then, the angel of death draws his *Rūḥ* out as if it were a thorny branch with wet wool wrapped round it and through it the thorny branch was to be pulled out. When this *Rūḥ* comes out, its stench is deadlier than the stench of a spoiled dead animal. The angels start moving out with the *Rūḥ* of the deceased. When other angels meet en-route, they ask: Whose evil *Rūḥ* is this? The angels tell them the worst of his name and title with which he was known in the world. They tell them that he is so and so, the son of so and so. Until they reach the first heaven and ask for the gate to be opened. The gate is not opened for him. The command comes to keep his record of deeds in *Sijjīn* where the record of the disobedient ones is maintained. His *Rūḥ* is thrown away. The *Rūḥ* returns to the grave. The angels responsible for account-taking make him sit up. They ask him the same questions they had asked the believer. His answer to every question is nothing but: مَا مَآءَ لَا أَدْرِي (O O, I do not know). He is given the bed of *Jahannam* and the dress of *Jahannam*. In his grave, a door is opened toward the *Jahannam* through which he keeps receiving the heat and flames of *Jahannam*. His grave is made to become straightened on him. We seek the refuge of Allah from it.

To sum up, it can be said that the spirits of deniers and disbelievers are taken upto the gate of the heaven. When the door does not open, they are thrown back from there. The verse: لَا تُفْتَحُ لَهُمُ أَبْوَابُ السَّمَاءِ (the gates of the heavens will not be opened for them - 41) may also mean that it is at the time of death that the gates of the heavens are not opened for them.

Towards the end of the verse, it was said: وَلَا يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتَّى يَلِجَ الْجَمَلُ فِي سَمِّ (and they shall not enter the Paradise unless a camel enters into the eye of a needle). Here, the word: يَلِجُ (*yalij*) is from: وُلُجَ (*wulūj*) which means to enter a narrow opening. *Jamal* is camel and *Samm*, the eye of a needle. The translation covers the meaning literally. The sense of the verse is that the camel is a big animal and its entry into the eye of

a needle is functionally impossible. So, equally impossible is their entry into Paradise. The purpose is to state that the punishment of Hell for them is everlasting. Then, follow the words which describe the added severity of the punishment in Hell: *لَهُمْ مِنْ جَهَنَّمَ مِهَادٌ وَ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ غَوَاشٍ* (For them there is a bed from the Jahannam, and over them there are coverings). The word: *مِهَاد* (*mihād*) means a place of rest, bed or floor and: *غَوَاشٍ* (*ghawāsh*) is the plural form of: *غَاشِيَةٌ* (*ghāshiyah*) which means something which covers. The sense is that for these people to rest, the bed and the top sheet will all come from Hell (an eloquent manner of putting the extreme severity of the punishment in everyday idiom). It will be noticed that at the end of the first verse, which mentions the deprivation from Paradise, it was said: *وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُجْرِمِينَ* (And this is how We recompense the sinners). Then, in the second verse, which describes the punishment of Hell, it was said: *وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ* (And this is how We recompense the transgressors) because it is more severe than the former.

The third verse (42) mentions those who dutifully follow Divine injunctions as they are the people of Paradise and there they shall live for ever.

Injunctions of the Shari'ah : Consideration of Convenience

But, along with the condition set forth for such people - that they believe and do good deeds - said there, in all mercy, was: *لَا تُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا وِزْرًا* (Allah does not obligate anyone beyond his capacity). The purpose is to emphasize that good deeds - which is a condition for entry into Paradise - is really not something so difficult as would be beyond the ability of a man or woman. In fact, Allah Ta'ālā has made the injunctions of the Shari'ah flexible and easy in every department of life. Leaves and concessions have been granted in every injunction keeping sickness, weakness, travel and other human needs under consideration.

According to Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ, when human beings were commanded to do good deeds, the likelihood existed that they might find this a little heavy on them since doing what is good and required, everywhere and under all conditions, was beyond one's capacity. Therefore, this doubt of theirs was removed through these words which ensure that the injunctions of Allah are given keeping in view

the various stages of human lives and that they are appropriate to prevailing conditions in all circumstances, for all time and all places. With such comprehensive consideration working behind these injunctions acting according to them should not be difficult at all.

For its People, a Paradise minus Malice

In the fourth verse (43), two particular states of the people of Jannah have been identified. The first one finds mention in: **وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِمْ** **رِسْنُ غِلٍّ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهِمُ الْأَنْهَارُ** (And We remove whatever of malice they had in their hearts. Rivers will flow beneath them).

According to Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, when believers would have crossed the Bridge of Ṣirāṭ and their deliverance from Jahannam would have become certain, they would be stopped over a bridge between Jannah and Jahannam - to remove their malice first. If someone had some grudge against someone, or ill-will or a heart-burn on the loss of a right, all that will be mutually settled and washed off for good right there. So, when they go to Jannah, they will be free of malice, hatred, animosity and other personality disorders of the kind.

It appears in Tafsīr Maẓharī that this bridge will obviously be the last part of the Bridge of Ṣirāṭ which is close to Jannah. 'Allāma Al-Suyūṭī has also opted for this approach.

Then comes the issue of settling rights. It goes without saying that any loss of rights cannot be compensated by money for nobody would have it there. Instead of that, in accordance with a Ḥadīth in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, this payment will be made in the currency of deeds. Lost rights will be compensated by giving the deeds of the usurper to the owner of the right. And should it be that no more deeds are left with this person and there remain other rights which still have to be settled, then, the sins of the owner of the unsettled right will be transferred to the account of the usurper of the right.

In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has called the person, who did good deeds in his worldly life but remained negligent of the rights of people, the greatest pauper - for as a result of this neglect he lost all good deeds and stood there empty-handed.

In this Ḥadīth narration, what has been described is but a general rule governing the fulfillment of rights and avenging an injustice in-

flicted. But, it is not necessary that everyone has to face this situation. In fact, according to the report of Ibn Kathīr and Tafsīr Maẓharī, possible there would be the situation that no one settles scores and takes revenge, yet mutual malices get to be removed without anything like that.

This is what appears in some narrations. When people would have crossed the Bridge of Širāṭ, they would reach a stream of water and drink from it. The property of this water will be such as would remove all mutual malice from the hearts of all of them. While commenting on the noble verse: *وَسَقْنَهُمْ مِنْهُمْ شَرَابًا طَهُورًا* (And their Lord will give to them to drink a pure drink - 76:21 - AYA), the Tafsīr of this verse given by Imām al-Qurṭubī is not any different when he says that washed away from this water of Jannah shall be all grudges in hearts.

After reciting this verse, Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā رضى الله عنه once said: I hope that we - 'Uthmān and Ṭalḥah and Zubayr and me - shall be among those whose hearts will be cleansed of malice before the entry into Paradise. (Ibn Kathīr) These noble souls named here had their mutual disagreements during their life time in the world which had reached the limits of war.

The second state of the people of Jannah described in this verse is that on their arrival in Jannah, they will express their gratitude to Allah Ta'ālā that He guided them towards Jannah and made it easy for them to reach there. They will say that, had the grace of Allah not been with them, they would have never dared reach there.

This tells us that no one can go to Jannah by personal effort alone - unless the grace of Allah Ta'ālā makes it possible for the aspirant. The reason is that even this 'effort' itself is not within one's control. That too comes through the grace and mercy of Allah Ta'ālā alone.

Guidance has Degrees, the Last being the Entry into Paradise

Imām Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, who has explained *Hidāyah* or guidance in a comprehensive manner as it appears in the Holy Qur'an, has said that guidance is a popular term but it has different degrees. The truth of the matter is that guidance is another name of finding the way to reach Allah Ta'ālā. Therefore, the degrees of achieving nearness to Allah are many and different and unending. Similarly, the degrees of

guidance too are extremely varied and different from each other. The lowest degree of guidance is deliverance from Kufr and Shirk, and having 'Imān. One on this degree of guidance has his or her orientation changed, away from the path of error - towards Allah. Then, there is the distance between Allah Ta'ālā and His servants. This distance takes a journey to cover - and every stage so covered has degrees, which is called *Hidāyah* or guidance. Therefore, guidance is a need. At no time, can anyone claim not to need it, not even prophets and messengers of Allah. For this reason, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, not only taught his people the lesson of: اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ (Guide us in the straight path), but he himself kept making this prayer - because there is no end to the stages and ranks of nearness to Allah, so much so, that entry into the Paradise mentioned in this verse has been identified as *Hidāyah* or guidance, for this is the last station of *Hidāyah*.*

Verses 44 - 49

وَنَادَىٰ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ أَصْحَابَ النَّارِ أَنْ قَدْ وَجَدْنَا مَا وَعَدَنَا رَبُّنَا حَقًّا فَهَلْ وَجَدْتُمْ مَا وَعَدَ رَبُّكُمْ حَقًّا قَالُوا نَعَمْ فَأَذَّنَ مُؤَذِّنٌ بَيْنَهُمْ أَنْ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾ الَّذِينَ يَصُدُّونَ عَنِ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَيَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ كَفُورُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَبَيْنَهُمَا حِجَابٌ وَعَلَى الْأَعْرَافِ رِجَالٌ يَعْرِفُونَ كُلًّا بِسِيمَاهُمْ وَنَادَوْا أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ أَنْ سَلِّمُوا عَلَيْكُمْ لَمْ يَدْخُلُوهَا وَهُمْ يَطْمَعُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَإِذَا صُرِفَتْ أَبْصَارُهُمْ تِلْقَاءَ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَنَادَىٰ أَصْحَابُ الْأَعْرَافِ رِجَالًا يَعْرِفُونَهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ قَالُوا مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْكُمْ جَمْعُكُمْ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾ أَهَؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ أَقْسَمْتُمْ لَا يَنَالُهُمُ اللَّهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ أَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ

* Those interested in reading more about the implications, meaning and degrees of guidance may see Ma'ariful-Qur'an, English Translation, Vol.I, pages 72-77.

تَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

And the people of Paradise will call out to the people of the Fire saying, "We have found true what our Lord had promised to us. Have you, then, found true what your Lord had promised?" They will say, "Yes." Then, an announcer between them will call out, "The curse of Allah is on the wrongdoers [44] who turn away from the way of Allah seeking crookedness in it, and they are the deniers of the Hereafter." [45]

And between the two groups there will be a partition. And on A'raf (the Heights), there shall be people who will recognize both through their signs, and they will call out to the people of Paradise, "Peace on you." They have not entered it, yet they hope to. [46] And when their eyes will be turned to the people of the Fire, they will say, "Our Lord, do not put us in the company of the unjust people." [47]

And the people of A'raf will call out to the people whom they would recognize through their signs saying, "Your masses did not help you, nor the arrogance you were used to. [48] Is it these for whom you swore that Allah will not reach them with mercy?" - "Enter the Paradise; there is no fear on you, nor shall you grieve." [49]

Commentary

When the people of Paradise will reach Paradise, where they belong, and the people of Hell, will reach Hell, where they belong, it is evident that the two places will be far apart from each other in all respects. But, despite this being so, many verses of the Holy Qur'an confirm that in between the two places, there will be points from where one could see the other, and engage in an exchange of conversation.

In Sūrah Al-Ṣaffāt, mentioned there are two persons who had known each other in their mortal life. But, one of them was a believer while the other, a disbeliever. In the Hereafter, when the believer will go to Paradise and the disbeliever, to Hell - they will notice each other and talk. Says the verse: فَاطَّلَعَ فَرَآهُ فِي سَوَاءِ الْجَحِيمِ قَالَ تَاللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُ لَتَرُدُّنَّ بِهِ وَكُلُوْا لَا نِعْمَةٌ رَبَّنَا لَئِنْ كُنْتُ مِنْ الْمُفْضَرِّينَ أَفَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْتَرَيْنِ إِلَّا مَوْتَكُنَا الْأَوَّلَى وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبَيْنِ (37:55): In brief, it means when the friend in Paradise will look for the friend in Hell, he will find

him lying in the middle of it. He will curse him commenting that he wanted him to be ruined like him and had it not been for the grace of Allah, he too would have been found lying in Hell like him. Then he would remind him of his saying to him in the mortal world that there was to be no life, no accounting, no reward, and no punishment after death. He could now see for himself what was happening in reality.

Such dialogues, questions and answers exchanged between the people of Paradise and the people of Hell appear not only in the verses cited above, but continue after that as well, through almost one section.

As for these access points in between Paradise and Hell from where inmates could be seen and addressed, these would really be a different kind of punishment for the people of Hell who would find themselves being reproached from all sides. Then, as they see the blessings being enjoyed by the people of Paradise, they will find themselves burning in rage for having missed those - and burning in Hell they already will be. As for the people of Paradise, they will have another kind of comfort when, after seeing the plight of those in Hell, they will be more grateful for the blessings they had the good fortune of having. Then, they would remember people who mocked at them for believing and they could nothing against them, and when they see them disgraced and punished ultimately, they would have the last laugh at their undoing. The same thing has been said in Sūrah Al-Muṭaffifin:

فَالْيَوْمَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنَ الْكُفَّارِ يَضْحَكُونَ عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ يُنظُرُونَ هَلْ يُؤْتَى الْكُفَّارُ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ .

But, on this Day, those who believed will be laughing at the disbelievers. They will be on raised couches watching (the denouement). Would have the disbelievers not been repaid for what they used to do? - 83:34-36.

Against the erring record of the people of Hell, admonition will also come from the angels. Addressing them, they will say:

هَذِهِ النَّارُ الَّتِي كُنْتُمْ بِهَا تُكَذِّبُونَ ه أَفَسِحَرُوا هَذَا أَمْ أَنْتُمْ لَا تَبْصُرُونَ

This is the Fire that you used to belie. Then (look), is this a magic, or is it that you do not see? - 52:14-15

Similarly, it is in the first of the cited verses that the people of Paradise will tell the people of Hell that they found the promise of blessings and comforts made by their Lord absolutely true and then they will ask them if the punishment against which they were warned actually came to them, or not. They will admit that they did see it.

In support of this question and answer between them, some angel shall, with the will of Allah, proclaim that cursed be the unjust who used to prevent people from the path of Allah and wished that their way too became crooked like their own and denied the Hereafter.

Who are the People of A'raf?

As a corollary of the dialogue between those in Paradise and Hell, there is something else pointed to in this verse - that there will be some people who had their deliverance from Hell but had not yet found entry into Paradise, though they did hope that they would. These people are called the people of A'raf.

What is A'raf? This is explained by the verses of Sūrah Al-Ḥadīd (58). They tell us that there will be three groups of people on the day of Resurrection. (1) Declared disbelievers and polytheists who will never make it to the Bridge of Ṣirāṭ, to begin with, because they will be thrown into the Hell through its doors before that stage comes; (2) believers who will have the light of Faith with them; and (3) hypocrites - since they have been tailing Muslims in the physical world, they will start behind them on the same trail. When they begin walking on the Bridge of Ṣirāṭ, a dense darkness will overtake all of them. The believers will still keep moving ahead with the help of their light of Faith while the hypocrites will call and ask them to stop and wait for them so that they could make use of the light they have. Thereupon, a caller for the sake of Allah will call: Turn back. Find your light there. The message given would be that the light they were seeking was the light of Faith and Righteous Deeds which could only be acquired at a place which they have left behind. Those who failed to acquire this light there through Faith and Deed shall not enjoy the benefit of that light here. In this state, a wall would be made to stand in between the hypocrites and the believers. The wall would have a gate. Beyond this gate, there will be nothing but punishment all over. Inside the gate there will be believers and the atmosphere will be filled with the mercy of

Allah and the view of Paradise. This is the subject of the following verse from Sūrah Al-Ḥadīd:

يَوْمَ يَقُولُ الْمُنْفِقُونَ وَالْمُنْفِقَاتُ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا انظُرُونَا نَقْتَسِبْ مِنْ تَوَكُّمٍ ۖ قِيلَ ارْجِعُوا وَرَاءَكُمْ فَالْتَمِسُوا نُورًا ۖ فَضُرِبَ بَيْنَهُم بِسُورٍ لَهُ بَابٌ بَاطِنُهُ فِيهِ الرَّحْمَةُ وَظَاهِرُهُ مِنْ قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابُ .

The Day the hypocrites, the men and the women, will say to those who had believed: "Wait for us. Let us have a share from your light," it will be said, "Return behind you, then seek light." So, put between them will be a wall with a gate in it. Inside it, there will be mercy all over; and outside it, the Punishment face to face - 57:13.

In the verse quoted above, the wall which will be placed to separate the people of Paradise from the people of Hell has been called: سُور (sūr). This word is primarily used for a security wall built around a major city, usually made wide and fortified and posted where are army guards who stay in bunkers and remain vigilant against any enemies.

Verse 46 of Sūrah Al-A'raf says: وَيَبْنِيهِمَا حِجَابٌ وَعَلَى الْأَعْرَافِ رِجَالٌ يَعْرِفُونَ كُلًّا بِسِيئَتِهِمْ (And between the two groups there will be a partition). According to Ibn Jarīr and other Tafsīr authorities, in this verse, the word: حِجَاب (hijāb) means the same wall which has been called: سُور (sūr) in Sūrah Al-Ḥadīd. The top portion of the wall is known as Al-A'raf because it is the plural form of 'Urf and 'Urf refers to the top portion of everything as it is distinct and recognizable from a distance. From this explanation we know that the top portion of the partition wall between Paradise and Hell is the A'raf. Then, the verse of the Sūrah tells us that on the day of Resurrection there will be some people at this place who would be seeing the happenings in Paradise and Hell both and will be talking to people on both sides.

As for who these people shall be and why would they be made to stop here, it is something in which commentators differ and the narrations of Ḥadīth vary. But, what is sound, weighty and acceptable with the majority of commentators is that these people will be the ones whose good and bad deeds will come out equal in weight on the Scale of Deeds. So, because of their good deeds, they will have their deliverance from Hell, but - because of their sins - they would have not been

admitted into the Paradise yet. Finally, they too will find entry into Paradise because of the grace and mercy of Allah Ta'ālā.

This is what Sayyidnā Hudhayfah, Ibn Mas'ūd and Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, from among the Ṣaḥabah, as well as other Ṣaḥabah and Tabi'īn say. Then, in it converge narrations of Ḥadīth reported variously. Ibn Jarir reports from Sayyidnā Ḥudhayfah رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was asked about the people of A'rāf. He said: These are people whose good and bad deeds will be equal. Therefore, from Jahan-nam they stand delivered. But, in Jannah they have not entered yet. They were stopped at this place of the A'rāf until the process of accounting of deeds and the judgement is over. Their fate would be decided after that and ultimately they will be forgiven and admitted into Jannah. (Ibn Kathīr)

There is a narration from Sayyidnā Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh reported by Ibn Marduwayh in which it is said that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was asked as to who were the people of A'rāf? He said: They are people who took part in Jihād without the pleasure and permission of their parents and laid down their lives in the way of Allah. So, the disobedience to parents stopped them from entering into the Paradise and their *shahādah* in the way of Allah stopped them from entering into the Hell.

The two Āḥadīth quoted above have no element of contradiction. Instead of that, this Ḥadīth is an example of those whose virtues and vices are equal in the same degree as here - martyrdom in the way of Allah on one side and disobedience to parents on the other. The scale is equal. (Ibn Kathīr)

Salam Greetings : Blessed Legacy of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

After having gone through the description and definition of the people of A'rāf, we can now take up the subject of the verse itself which says that the people of A'rāf will call out the people of Paradise and say: "سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ" (*Salāmun 'Alaiyikum*). This word of greeting is also used in our present world when we meet each other. This is offered as a gift, a mark of respect and grace felt for the person so greeted. This is *Mas-nūn*, a way of Sunnah as practiced and recommended to his community by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. This is also said to the dead while visiting their graves. Then, it will also be the form of greeting on the

plain of Resurrection, and in Paradise as well. But, a closer look at the verses of the Qur'an and the narrations of Ḥadīth tells us that saying: "سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ" (As-Salāmu 'Alaiyukum) is Masnūn as long as we live in this world. Then, after having passed away from this mortal world, what is Masnūn is saying: "سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ" (Salāmun 'Alaiyukum) - without the letters Alif and Lām at the beginning of Salām. The words to be said at the time of visiting graves as mentioned in the Qur'an also appear in this form, that is: سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِمَا صَبَرْتُمْ فَنِعْمَ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ : Peace on you [Salāmun 'Alaiyukum] for that you observed patience. Then, fair is the ultimate abode - 13:24). And when the angels will receive the people of Paradise, this word appears in the same form there too: سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طِبْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوهَا خَالِدِينَ : (Salāmun 'Alaiyukum [Peace on you], you have done well. So, enter in it to live forever - 39:73). And here too, the people of A'raf will greet the people of Paradise with the same words: سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ (Salāmun 'Alaiyukum).

Stated next is the status of the people of A'raf that they have yet to enter Paradise, though they hope to. After that it is said: وَإِذَا صُرِفَتْ أَبْصَارُهُمْ تِلْقَاءَ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ (And when their eyes will be turned towards the people of the Fire, they will say, "Our Lord, do not put us in the company of the unjust people - 47).

The fifth verse (48) also mentions that the people of A'raf will address the people of Hell and admonish them by saying that the wealth and power that they depended on, and because of which they had become proud and arrogant, went the way of waste for all those strengths did not work for them at their hour of need.

Said in the sixth verse (49) is: أَهْلَآءَ الَّذِينَ أَقْسَمْتُمْ لَا يَنَالُهُمُ اللَّهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ أَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ تَحْزَنُونَ (Is it these for whom you swore that Allah would not reach them with mercy?" - "Enter the Paradise; there is no fear on you, nor shall you grieve).

Explaining this, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه says: When the questions and answers between the people of A'raf and the people of Paradise and Hell both will be over, that will be the time when the Lord of all the worlds will address the people of Hell and tell them about the people of A'raf that they swore that the people of A'raf will not be forgiven their sins and mercy will not be shown to them. Then, there comes an immediate declaration of His mercy when the people of A'raf will be told: Go and enter the Paradise. You should have

no fear of what had happened in the past nor should you have any anxiety about the future. (Ibn Kathīr)

Verses 50 - 53

وَنَادَىٰ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ أَنْ أَفِيضُوا عَلَيْنَا مِنَ
الْمَاءِ أَوْ مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ حَرَّمَهُمَا عَلَى
الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٥٠﴾ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَهُمْ لَهْوًا وَلَعِبًا وَغَرَّتُهُمْ
الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا فَالْيَوْمَ نَنسُوهُمْ كَمَا نَسُوا لِقَاءَ يَوْمِهِمْ هَذَا
وَمَا كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَجْحَدُونَ ﴿٥١﴾ وَلَقَدْ جِئْنَاهُمْ بِكِتَابٍ فَصَّلْنَاهُ
عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ هُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾ هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا
تَأْوِيلَهُ يَوْمَ يَأْتِي تَأْوِيلَهُ يَقُولُ الَّذِينَ نَسَوْهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَدْ
جَاءَتْ رُسُلُ رَبِّنَا بِالْحَقِّ فَهَلْ لَنَا مِنْ شُفَعَاءَ فَيَشْفَعُوا لَنَا
أَوْ نُرَدُّ فَنَعْمَلَ غَيْرَ الَّذِي كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ قَدْ خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ
وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

And the people of Fire will call out to the people of Paradise, "Pour on us some water or some of what Allah has provided you." They will say, "Allah has prohibited these for disbelievers, [50] who had taken their faith as play and game, and the worldly life has deceived them." So, today We shall forget them, as they forgot to face this day of theirs, and as they used to deny Our signs. [51]

And surely We have brought them the Book We have elaborated, with knowledge, a guidance and mercy for people who believe. [52]

They are waiting for nothing but its final result. The day when its final result comes, those who had ignored it earlier will say, "Surely, the messengers of our Lord had come with truth. So, are there any intercessors for us who could intercede in our favour? Or, could we be sent back, so that we might do contrary to what we used to do?" They have put their selves to loss, and lost

from them are those whom they used to coin. [53]

Verse 54

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ
اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يُغْشَى اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهُ حَثِيثًا وَ
الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُومَ مُسَخَّرَاتٍ بِأَمْرِهِ أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَ
الْأَمْرُ تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٥٤﴾

Surely, your Lord is Allah who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then He positioned himself on the Throne. He covers the day with night which pursues it swiftly. And (He created) the sun and the moon and the stars, subjected to His command. Beware, for Him is the creation and the command. Glorious is Allah, the Lord of all the worlds. [54]

Commentary

Verse 54 begins with the statement that Allah has created the heavens and the earth and the planets and the stars and that they perform their functions under a firmly established system. The statement releases an inevitable suggestion that the maker of this system has the most perfect power conceivable. This, in turn, invites every reasonable human being to think. Here is the most sacred Being who is capable of bringing this great universe from non-being to the state of being and who can keep it functioning through the wisest of systems. Why would it be difficult for him to undo everything and recreate it once again on the day of *Qiyāmah*? For human beings, the best course is to stop denying the *Qiyāmah* and turn to the same Being as their Rabb who is their Master and Nurturer. From Him they should seek what they need and Him alone they should worship. Let them come out of the quagmire of worshiping their own kind and recognize the truth. Said herein was: 'Surely, your Lord is Allah - Who created the heavens and the earth in six days.'

The Creation of the Heavens and the Earth: Why in Six Days?

A question arises here. We know that Allah Ta'ālā has great power. He is capable of creating the whole universe in a single moment. The Holy Qur'an itself says so time and again. For instance, in Sūrah Al-

Qamar, it is said: *وَمَا أَمْرُنَا إِلَّا وَاحِدَةٌ كَلَمْحٍ بِالْبَصَرِ* (And Our Command is but a single Word, - like the twinkling of an eye - 54:50). Again, in Sūrah Ya Sīn, it is said: *إِذَا أَرَادْنَا أَنْ نَقُولَ لَكَ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ* (when [Allah] intends [to create] a thing - for it He says: "Be" and it comes to be - 36:82). Why, then, would six days be spent in creating the universe?

Commentator of the Qur'an, Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn Jubayr رضى الله عنه has given an answer by saying that Allah is certainly capable of creating everything there is in a single moment, but Divine wisdom so demanded that the creation of our universe take six days so that human beings could be taught the lesson of graduation and perfection in running the universal system. This is supported by a Ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Working with deliberation, dignity and graduation is from Allah Ta'ālā and hastening, from Shayṭān. (Maṣḥarī, with reference to Shu'ab al-Īmān by Al-Baihaqī)

The implication is that the attitude of rushing into doing things is not good for human beings. One cannot give due thought to and take into consideration all aspects of an issue at hand if driven by haste. An action taken in haste spoils what is done and brings remorse in the end. So, whatever is done with proper advance thinking and functional ease brings Barakah (blessing from Allah which enhances the efficiency and outcome of the endeavour).

How were Days and Nights identified before the Creation of Earth, Heavens and Planets?

The second question is: The presence of the day and night is recognized through the movement of the sun. But, before the birth of the earth and the heavens, when there was no sun and moon, on what basis comes the count of six days?

For this reason, some commentators have said that six days means a time duration equal to six days and nights as in the existing world. But, a much clearer approach is that the terminology of day and night, that is, what occurs from sunrise to sunset is day and what appears from sunset to the next sunrise is night, is a terminology used in this world. May be, before the birth of the universe, Allah Ta'ālā had other signs determined for the day and night - as it would be in Paradise where the day and night will not depend on the movement of the sun.

This also tells us that it is not necessary that the six days during which the earth and the heavens were created, be equal to our six days. Instead, it is possible that they may be longer than these - as the Qur'an says about the day of 'Ākhirah which will be equal to one thousand years.

Abū 'Abdullāh Rāzi has said that the movement of the far firmament is so fast as compared to the movements of our earth that the raised step of a man running here has still to come down to touch the ground when the far firmament moves a distance of three thousand miles. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and Mujāhid say that six days here mean the six days of 'Ākhirah. The same view appears in a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه as reported by Ḍaḥḥāk.

And these six days during which the creation of the universe took place began, according to authentic narrations, from Friday and ended on Friday. On Yowm al-Sabt (the day of Sabbath), that is, Saturday, there was no work done on the creation of the universe. Some 'Ulama say that 'sabt' means to discontinue. The day was named as Yowm al-Sabt because the work of creation was over by that day. (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr)

Mentioned in this verse is the creation of the universe in six days. Its details appear in verses 9 and 10 of Sūrah Ḥa Mīm As-Sajdah (Fuṣṣilat - 41:9,10) saying that the earth was created in two days, then, created on the earth were, mountains, rivers, tributeries, trees, vegetation and things, human beings and animals could eat, in another two days. This comes to a total of four days. So, it was first said: خَلَقَ قَدَرٌ فِيهَا (created the earth in two days) and then it was said: أَقْوَامَهَا فِي أَرْبَعَةِ أَيَّامٍ (and determined in it the measure of its sustenance in four days).

The first two days during which the earth was created are Sunday and Monday; and the other two days during which the mountains, rivers and the life support systems of the earth were created are Tuesday and Wednesday. Thereafter, it was said: فَكَمَّلْنَاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ (that is, then We completed the seven heavens in two days - 41:13). As obvious, these two days will be Thursday and Friday. Thus, by Friday, this becomes a total of six days.

In the present verse (54), after mentioning the creation of the heavens and the earth, it was said: *ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ* (then He positioned Himself on the Throne). The word: *اسْتَوَىٰ* (*Istawā*), as followed by *'alā* (on) here, literally means to take position on, or to settle, or be established. The word: *عَرْشٍ* (*'Arsh*) means throne. Now, the question is what is this throne, the throne of the great Raḥmān, and how is it shaped or constituted, or is as it is - and what would the phenomena of 'positioning' on it mean?

Regarding this, the safest creed to hold, that which is clear and correct, and fairly doubt-free too, is no other but that of the most righteous elders, the Ṣaḥabah and the Tabi'īn - and later, that of many Sūfī thinkers as well. The creed is that human reason is incapable of comprehending the reality of the Being and Attributes of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu*. Pursuing the knowledge of its exact reality is an exercise in futility, even harmful. One should believe, as a matter of general principle, that the meaning intended by Allah Ta'ālā - whatever it may be - is the one correct and true. And, in this process, one should not try to determine or worry about fixing a meaning on one's own.

Someone asked the famous Imām Mālik exactly the same question: What is the meaning of : *اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ* (*Istawā 'ala al-'arsh* : positioned Himself on the throne)? He paused for a while, then said: 'Everyone knows the meaning of '*Istawā*,' and its particular nature and reality is such that human reason cannot comprehend it, and having faith in it is obligatory (Wājib), and asking a question about its nature and reality is Bid'ah (innovation in established religion) - because, the noble Ṣaḥabah, may Allah be pleased with them all, never asked such questions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Great elders (*Salaf*), Sufyān Al-Thawriy, Imām Awza'i, Layth ibn Sa'd, Sufyān ibn 'Uyaynah and 'Abdullāh ibn Mubārak, may the mercy of Allah be upon them all, have said that the verses which have appeared in the Qur'ān as related to the Being and Attributes of Allah Ta'ālā should be believed in as they have come and exactly as they are, without any explanation, explication and interpretation. (Maḥzarī)

Said after that in the verse was: *بُغْضَى اللَّيْلِ النَّهَارَ يُطَلِّبُهُ حِينًا* (He covers the day with night which pursues it swiftly). The sense is that this alternation of the night and day is a phenomenon of revolutionary proportions

in that it brings the whole world from light into the darkness, and from darkness into the light. Then, this very phenomena lends itself so swiftly and smoothly and obediently to the magnificent subduing power of Allah Ta'ālā that the least delay is not caused (in this transformation on such an unimaginable scale).

After that, it was said: وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ وَالنُّجُومُ مُسَخَّرَاتٌ بِأَمْرِهِ that is, Allah created the sun and the moon and the stars in a state that all of them are moving in obedience to His will and command.

For a reasonable person, this is an invitation to think, to think about things made by the made he observes around him all the time. Experts make machines of all sorts. Some of them would have engineering problems right from the start. Others may not have such problems, but machines are machines, no matter how strong the base material and how impeccable the design. Parts have their normal wear and tear, or need for adjustment, repairs, servicing. Machines become idle until fixed. It might take weeks, or months, to put them back to work. But, look at these God-made machines. The efficiency and the perfection with which they started working from day one is still there. They are working wonderfully non-stop. Their movement is as precise as ever, not a second fast or slow. There is no wear and tear of parts and no need to go to a workshop. The reason is that they are functioning 'subject to His command' (مُسَخَّرَاتٌ بِأَمْرِهِ). In other words, they need no source of energy to move them, no engine to make them function. They are working only under Divine Command. They are subjected to that alone. Therefore, the emergence of the slightest malfunction in them is impossible. But, of course, when the Absolute Master Himself decides to eliminate them at a time appointed by Him, this entire system would disintegrate. That day will be the day of *Qiyāmah*.

After having pointed out some examples, the description of the Absolute Subduing Power of Allah Ta'ālā was put in the form of a general rule by saying: أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ (Beware, for Him alone is the creation and the command). The word: خَلَقَ (*khalq*) means to create and: أَمَرَ (*amr*), to command. The sense is that being the Creator and the Master is exclusive to Him. Other than Him, no one else can create the most insignificant of things, nor does anyone have the right to subject anyone to his command (except that Allah Ta'ālā Himself delegates a particular area

of activity to someone, in which case that too would be, in reality, nothing but the command of Allah). So, the verse means that creating all these things was the work of none but Him, and putting them into service was also not something anyone else could handle, for that too is an spectacle of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā.

In Sūfi thought, 'Khalq' and 'Amr' are two domains. 'Khalq' relates to matter and 'Amr' to the refined abstract. The Qur'ānic verse: قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي (Say, "The soul is a command from my Lord." - 17:58) points out in this direction as "Rūh" (soul, spirit) has been identified as a command from the Lord. The sense of the creation and the command being exclusive to Allah Ta'ālā would, in this light, mean that everything between the heavens and the earth is from matter and its creation has been called "Khalq." And what is beyond these, free from matter, its creation has been called "Amr." (Maṣḥarī)

At the end of the verse, it was said: تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ (Glorious is Allah, the Lord of the worlds). The word: تَبَارَكَ (*tabarak*) appearing here is a derivation from *barakah* which means to increase, grow, become more, remain, sustain, besides being employed in many other shades of meaning. At this place, 'tabaraka' means to be high and supreme. It can be taken in the sense of high and sustaining, for Allah Ta'ālā is both. The sense of high finds confirmation in a sentence of the Ḥadīth which says: تَبَارَكْتَ وَتَعَالَيْتَ يَا ذَا الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ (You are blessed and high, O Master of Glory and Honour). Here, the word: 'tabārka' has been explained by the word: *ta'ālāita* which follows.

Verses 55 - 56

أَدْعُوا رَبَّكُمْ تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَلَا
تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا
إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾

Supplicate to your Lord humbly and secretly. Surely, He does not like those who cross the limits. [55]

And do no mischief on the earth after it has been set in order. And supplicate to Him in fear and hope. Surely, the mercy of Allah is close to the good in deeds. [56]

Commentary

Mentioned in previous verses were particular manifestations of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā, and His major blessings. The present verses lead us to consider: When He is the Master of perfect power, the sender of all blessings, and the Lord of all the worlds, it naturally follows that He should be the One to be called upon and prayed to under all circumstances, whether in distress or in need. The attitude of bypassing Him and turning towards some other direction is ignorance and failure.

Along with it, identified in these verses are some rules of etiquette to be followed when making *Du'a'* (prayer, supplication). If due consideration is given to these rules, the hope that a prayer will be answered increases.

The Meaning and Etiquette of *Du'a'* and *Dhikr*

The word: *دَعَا* (*Du'a'*), in the Arabic language, means to call upon someone to remove one's need. It is also used to remember in the absolute sense. Both meanings can be taken here. The verse says: *ادْعُوا رَبَّكُمْ* (Supplicate to your Lord) that is, call your Rabb for your needs, or remember your Rabb and worship Him.

In the first case, it would mean: Ask Allah alone for what you need. In the second case, the sense would be: Do your *Dhikr* and *'Ibādah* for Him alone. Both these explanations have been reported from Tafsīr authorities among the early righteous elders.

After that, it was said: *تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً* (humbly and secretly). The word: *تَضَرُّعٌ* (*taḍarru'*) means realization of inability, humility, and submission in a refined spirit of self-abasement (not found in the English language and its modern, secular, cultural context). And the word: *خُفْيَةً* (*khufyah*) means secret, secluded, or private (as opposed to open and public - as used in English too, but with no relevance to the dominant sense of secret in English bearing on the mysterious, the occult, and the whole field of espionage).

In the frame of these two words, described there are two important rules of etiquette which govern *Du'a'* and *Dhikr*. First of all, in order that *Du'a'* be answered, it is necessary that one appears before Allah Ta'ālā as weak, helpless and simply unable to hold on his own, modest

and humble, and submits to Him with a total negation of what is supposed to be pride, dignity, honour, ego, or self-view - and then makes *Du'ā'*. *Du'ā'* is a thing of the soul which requires that its words match the feebleness and humbleness of the maker of *Du'ā'*, that the manner of saying it remains a mirror of modesty, and that this overall humility should ooze forth from the very physical approach to this making of *Du'ā'*. Given this anatomy and profile of *Du'ā'*, the common practice of making *Du'ā'* these days cannot really be called the making of *Du'ā'*. It would, rather, be the reading of it. What happens most of the time is that we do not know what we are saying and it has become a routine as we notice in common Masajid. Imāms would usually say, rather read, some words of *Du'ā'* in the Arabic language which they have memorized and do this at the end of Ṣalāh. Most of the time, in some areas, the Imāms themselves do not know the meaning and sense of what they say - and even if they do know it, at least the less-knowing participants of the congregation are virtually unaware of what is being said. They would almost mechanically go on saying 'Āmīn, 'Āmīn' after the words read by the Imām without having any clue as to what was being said there. The outcome of all this stage demonstration is the vocalization of some words. *Du'ā'* has a reality of its own which is just not there. Then, this is an entirely different matter that Allah Ta'ālā, in His infinite mercy, may accept these very lifeless words and give them the effect of answered prayers. But, it is necessary that everyone understands that *Du'ā'* is not 'read.' It is 'asked.' Therefore, it is crucial that one asks as one should, properly, as due.

Then, there is another aspect of *Du'ā'*. If a person does know the meanings of the words of his *Du'ā'* - and even understands what he is saying - still, if it is not accompanied by proper approach, manner and physical bearing, the *Du'ā'* stands reduced to a bland claim to which no created servant of Allah is entitled.

So, given in the first word was the spirit of *Du'ā'* which requires that one shows his humility and prays to Allah for what he needs. Then, in the second word, the instruction given is that the asking in *Du'ā'* for what one needs should be done secretly and in a lowered voice which is superior in merit and more likely to be answered. The reason is that making *Du'ā'* in a raised voice is not free of three possible draw-

backs. Firstly, it is difficult to maintain modesty and humility in doing so. Secondly, there is the danger of hypocrisy and desire for recognition creeping in through this mode. Thirdly, the manner in which this *Du'ā* is made only goes to show that the person making it almost does not know that Allah Ta'ālā is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. He knows what we show on the outside and also that which we conceal inside. He hears everything said quietly or loudly. Therefore, when the voice of the Companions reached a loud pitch during *Du'ā* made on the occasion of the Battle of Khaybar, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'You are not calling someone deaf or absent that you say it in such a loud voice. Instead, your addressee is someone Hearing, Near, that is, Allah Ta'ālā (so, to raise your voice is redundant). Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu* has Himself mentioned the *Du'ā* of a righteous person in these words: اِذْ نَادَى رَبَّهُ نِدَاءً خَفِيًّا (When he called his Rabb calling in a lowered voice - 19:3).' This tells us that the state of *Du'ā* liked by Allah Ta'ālā is that it be asked of Him in a lowered and subdued voice.

Sayyidnā Ḥasan al-Baṣrī says: There is a difference of seventy degrees in making *Du'ā* openly and loudly when matched by the one made in a lowered voice. It was the habit of early righteous elders that they would exert to their maximum in Dhikr and *Du'a* which kept them busy most of the time, but their voice was not heard by anyone. In fact, their supplications would remain between them and their Rabb. Many of them would memorize the whole Qur'an and keep engaged in reciting it, but others would not know about it. Then, there would be others engaged in their pursuit of advanced religious knowledge, but they would never go about telling others that they were doing so. There would be many others who would return from their homes after having long sessions of Ṣalāh but no one would come to know anything about that. He also said that he had seen such blessed people who would never perform 'Ibādāt, which they could do in private, out in the open where people could see them - and their voices during *Du'ā* would be very low. (Ibn Kathīr, Maḥzarī)

Ibn Jurayj has said that raising voices in *Du'ā* and making it noisy is Makrūh (reprehensible). In his Ahkām al-Qur'an, Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ has said: This verse tells us that making *Du'ā* in a lowered voice is more merit-worthy than making it in a raised voice. It has

been reported likewise from Ḥaḍrat Ḥasan Baṣrī and Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه. This verse also tells us that the 'Āmin' said at the end of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah should also be said in a lowered voice, which is more merit-worthy, because 'Āmin' (Amen : so be it) is also a *Du'ā'*.

May Allah Ta'ālā guide Imāms of Masājid in our time who seem to have forgotten this teaching of the Qur'ān and Sunnah and the instructions of early righteous elders in this matter. After every Ṣalāh, what follows as *Du'ā'* has become an artificial procedure. Some words are read out loudly which, besides being contrary to the etiquette and rules of *Du'ā'*, become the source of disturbing the Ṣalāh of those who joined the congregation after it had started and were busy completing the missed part after the Imām had finished. The overwhelming influence of custom has made them incapable of noticing its drawbacks. On a particular occasion where the purpose is to have a whole group make a particular *Du'ā'*, one person may say the words of *Du'ā'* in a reasonably audible voice and others say 'Āmin' after it, then, it does not matter. However, the condition is that this activity does not become the source of disturbance in the Ṣalāh and 'Ibādah of others - and that this does not become a matter of habit and custom whereby common people start believing in it as the standard method of making *Du'ā'*, as happening so commonly these days.

What has been said above concerned the making of *Du'ā'* for one's needs. If *Du'ā'* is taken in the sense of Dhikr (remembrance) and 'Ibādah (worship) at his place, then, according to the established position of early 'Ulamā, low-voiced Dhikr is more merit-worthy than loud Dhikr. As for the practice of Shaykhs in the Chistiah Order who recommend loud Dhikr for beginners, they do so in view of the spiritual condition of the seeker, as a measure of treatment, so that by voicing it any lack of alertness would go away and the heart would learn to become attuned to the Dhikr of Allah - otherwise, raising the voice in Dhikr, as such, is not desirable even with them, though it is permissible, and its justification stands proved from Ḥadīth as well, of course, subject to the condition that, in it, there be no hypocrisy or the desire to show off (*riyā'*).

Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Ibn Ḥibbān, Al-Baihaqī and others have reported from a narration by Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās رضى الله عنه

that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

خَيْرُ الذِّكْرِ الْخَفِيُّ وَخَيْرُ الرِّزْقِ مَا يَكْفِي

'The best Dhikr is hidden and the best sustenance is what becomes sufficient.'

However, under particular conditions and timings, a voiced Dhikr is actually more desirable and merit-worthy. Details of these timings and conditions have been explained by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم through his word and deed, for example, calling Adhān and Iqāmah with a raised voice, reciting the Qur'ān during the voiced prayers with a raised voice, saying the Takbīrs of Ṣalāh, the Takbīrs of Tashrīq, the Talbiyah in Ḥajj etc., with a raised voice. Therefore, Muslim jurists, may Allah have mercy on them all, have reached the decision that in particular conditions and places where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has, by word or deed, taught us to raise the voice, voices must be raised. Under conditions and situations other than these, voiceless Dhikr is most preferable and beneficial.

At the end of the verse, it was said: إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ (Surely, He does not like those who cross the limits). The word: المعتدين (*al-mu'tadīn*) is a derivation from *I'tidā'* which means to cross the limits. The sense is that Allah Ta'ālā does not like those who cross the limits, exactly as given in the translation. This crossing of limits, whether in *Du'ā'* or some other activity, has the same outcome - that Allah Ta'ālā does not like that. In fact, if looked at closely, the religion of Islām is the very name of observing limits and restrictions and electing to submit and obey. Take the example of Ṣalāh, Ṣawm, Ḥajj, Zakāh and all dealings and transactions, when limits set by the Sharī'ah of Islam are crossed in them, they do not remain acts of worship anymore - instead, they become sin.

Crossing the limits in *Du'ā'* may take several forms. Firstly, that literal formalities, such as rhyming and other stylistic devices, are employed in *Du'ā'* which may spoil its essential ingredients of humility and submission. Secondly, that unnecessary restrictions are introduced in *Du'ā'* - as it appears in Ḥadīth that Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mughaffal رضى الله عنه saw that his son was making *Du'ā'* in the following words: 'O Allah, I seek from You the palace in Paradise which is white

in colour and located on the right hand side.' He stopped him and said: 'Making such restrictions in *Du'ā* is crossing the limit, which has been prohibited in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth.' (Mazharī from a narration of Ibn Mājah and others)

The third form of crossing the limits is that someone makes a *Du'ā* wishing ill of Muslims in general, or asks from Allah something which is harmful for them. Similarly, it is also a form of crossing the limits - as mentioned here - that *Du'ā* be made in a raised voice without the need to do so. (Tafsīr Mazharī, Ahkām al-Qur'ān)

In the second verse (56), it was said: *وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا* (And do no mischief on the earth after it has been set in order). Two antonyms have appeared here: *صَلَحَ* (*ṣalāḥ*) and: *فَسَادَ* (*fasād*). '*Ṣalāḥ*' means the state of being good, correct, right, proper or set in order as in the translation. Then, *Fasād* refers to the state of evil, corruption, mischief, disorder. Imām Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī has said in his Mufradāt al-Qur'ān that *Fasād* refers to something going beyond the limits of moderation, whether this crossing over is insignificant or enormous, and the measure of an increase or decrease in every *Fasād* depends on this crossing of the limits of moderation. The farther the limits are crossed, *Fasād* will increase. *Fasād* means to make things bad and *Iṣlāḥ* means to correct, reform or put into order. Therefore, the verse: *وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا* means: 'do not make things bad on the earth after that Allah has made it good and proper.'

Imām Rāghib has also said: There are several forms in which Allah Ta'ālā makes something right, correct and proper. Firstly, He began by creating them right, correct and proper, as in: *وَأَصْلَحَ بَالَهُمْ* (He will improve their condition - 47:2). Secondly, removed was the corruption that had entered into something, as in: *يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ* (That He may make your deeds good and right - 33:71). Thirdly, that a command is given to put things in order. This verse carries a command of abstention from mischief on the earth after it has been set in order. Here, the ordering of the earth may be taken in two senses. Firstly, the outward propriety that it was made arable and capable of growing trees with rains made to come from clouds resulting in flowers and fruits as gifts from plants and trees - and that the earth was made the source of life support for human beings and animals.

The second sense is that Allah Ta'ālā set things right on the earth inwardly and spiritually - by sending His messengers and Books and instructions and purifying it from Kufr and Shirk and error. It is quite possible that the verse means both inward and outward order in a total way. Thus, the verse would now mean that Allah Ta'ālā has put the earth in proper order both physically and spiritually and now you should not create disorder or engineer evil in there through your acts of sin and disobedience.

What is Order or Disorder on the Earth and What have Sins of People to do with it?

The way there are two aspects of order (Iṣlāḥ), the outward and the inward, or the physical and the spiritual, in the same way, there are two aspects of disorder (Fasād) also. As for the outward or physical order of the earth is concerned, that it be right and proper, it will be realized that Allah Ta'ālā has made it to be a mass or body which is neither liquid as water making it difficult to settle down upon it, nor is it hard as rock or iron which could not be dug up. It has been created to be in a middle state so that human beings could make it soft and smooth lending itself to being farmed and become capable of growing plants and trees and flowers and fruits. Then, they could also dig it up to sink wells and make moats and canals, lay strong foundations for houses to live; and then, right in and out of the earth, He created things and circumstances which would help habitate the earth, make vegetation, trees, flowers and fruits grow in it; and then, from the outside, He created wind, light, heat and chill, and made water rain through clouds over it so that trees could grow. And brought in service were stars and planets from where warm and cold rays were cast on them which filled flowers and fruits with colour and juice. Human beings were endowed with intelligence through which they dug up raw materials from the earth, like iron, copper, wood and so many other metals and rocks which they harnessed into a new world full of industries and artifices. This is the outward ordering of the earth which was brought into effect by the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā.

As for the inward and spiritual ordering of life is concerned, it depends on the remembrance of Allah (*Dhikr*), relationship with Allah (*Ta'alluq ma' Allah*) and on obedience to Him (*Iṭā'ah*). For this, to be-

gin with, Allah Ta'ālā has already placed in the heart of every human being a basic substance and urge to remember and to obey Him: **فَأَنبَهَآ** **فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا** (Then, He inspired it [that is, inspired the soul or heart instinctively] as to its wrong and as to its right -91:8). So, all around human beings not a particle remains in which Allah Ta'ālā has not placed wonders of His perfect power and His astounding creativity, seeing which, even a person of average understanding would be moved to say: **فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ** (So blessed be Allah, the Best to create! - 23:14). Other than these manifestations, He sent His messengers, revealed His Books through which the essential linkage between the Creator and the created was fully established.

Thus, the command given is that now that the earth has been placed in proper order, outwardly and inwardly, let it not go bad through human misdeeds.

As pointed out earlier, like Iṣlāḥ or order having two aspects, Fasād or disorder also has two aspects, the outward and the inward. This saying of Allah Ta'ālā forbids both.

Though the recurring insistence of the Qur'ān and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is on spiritual order as a cardinal duty which, in effect, aims to stop any emergence of spiritual disorder as a counter possibility. But, in the world we live in, the linkage between the order and disorder of the physical and spiritual is such that any disorder in one becomes the source of disorder in the other. Therefore, when the Sharī'ah of the Qur'ān has blocked the doors of spiritual disorder, it has also prohibited physical disorder. Theft, robbery, murder and all ways of immodesty and indecency create all sorts of physical and spiritual disorder in the world. So, stern restrictions were placed and punishments proposed particularly against such evil acts while common sins and crimes were also prohibited - because, every sin becomes the source of physical disorder at some time, and that of spiritual disorder at some other. And, if looked at closely, every outward disorder becomes the cause of inward disorder, and conversely, every inward disorder becomes the source of outward disorder.

That outward or physical disorder becomes the inevitable source of inward or spiritual disorder is obvious, for it is the contravention of the command to obey Divine injunctions - in fact, disobedience to Allah

Ta'ālā is another name for spiritual disorder. As for the chemistry of spiritual disorder and how it transforms itself as the cause of physical disorder, this can be discerned only through a little serious reflection. The reason is that this whole world and everything big and small in it was created by the Master of the domain of creation to wherever it extends, and it is but subservient to His command. So far as human beings remain obedient to Allah, everything stands harnessed into their service as due and proper. But, when human beings start disobeying Allah Ta'ālā, everything in the world starts disobeying human beings from behind a curtain through which they cannot see with their mortal eyes. But, it is by deliberation into the effects, properties, results and outcomes of these things that one does find the relevant proof of their becoming hostile very conclusively.

If taken with a surface view, human beings keep using all these things normally. When water goes down the throat, it does not refuse to quench thirst; food does not stop removing hunger and dress and home do not disappoint them by refusing to provide defence against heat and chill.

But, when looked at in terms of the ultimate outcome, it would appear that none of these things is fulfilling its assigned job - because, the real function and use of all these things is that they should provide peace and comfort, that anxieties are removed and sicknesses are cured.

Now if you look at conditions prevailing in our world, you will realize that, despite the proliferation of things of comfort and the means and materials of curing diseases much beyond any expectations, the majority of human beings is victimized by extreme distresses and diseases. Never-known diseases and ever-new calamities seem to be the order of the day. No one, not even the highest among human beings, is contented and in peace in his or her station of life. In fact, the more these functional facilities and fruits of skill keep increasing in their output, the more increasing becomes the parallel manifestation of diseases, anxieties, disasters and hardships - very much like the saying in Urdu which means: 'The more they treat you, the more sick they make you.'

If modern man bewitched by the magic of energy and its material

gains were to rise a little above his infatuation with things and technology, he will realize that all our efforts to invent and construct things and to lay the foundations of a society on top of them have flatly failed to give us peace and comfort which was our real purpose. There is no reason for this but that inward disorder we have been talking about which means that we have started disobeying our Rabb, our Creator and Master, so His creation has started disobeying us on the inward front - that it refuses to provide real peace and comfort for us, despite all our efforts at break-neck speed. To this the famous Maulānā Rūmī pointed out by saying that the elements of dust, air, water and fire, though they appear inert and *sans* sense yet, in reality, they too do possess a degree of intelligence which makes them work under the command of their Master.

To sum up, it can be said that sin, heedlessness towards Allah Ta'ālā, and disobedience to Him do not only create spiritual disorder, but they also lead to the inevitable physical disorder. When the same Maulānā Rūmī says that the cloud does not come to rain when you stop paying Zakāh while from Zina (adultery) results an epidemic affecting all directions. This is no poetic imagination. This is a reality authentically supported by the Qur'an and Ḥadīth. But, what becomes visible in this world is just a light sample of the ultimate punishment in the form of diseases, epidemics, storms, hurricanes and floods.

Therefore, included in the sense of the verse: لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا (And do no mischief on the earth after it has been set in order) are crimes and sins which cause disorder in the world physically and outwardly - and also included there are sin, disobedience, and heedlessness towards Allah Ta'ālā. Therefore, immediately after in this verse, it was said: وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا (And supplicate to Him in fear and hope). It means that it should be done in a way that, on the one hand, one has the fear of the Du'ā' remaining unanswered, while on the other hand, one has full hope tied to His mercy. These very twin attitudes of fear and hope are the two wings of the human soul on its journey with truth and fortitude. On these it flies high and through these it reaches superior ranks destined for it.

Then, as the text obviously shows, the degree of fear and hope should be equal. Some 'Ulama have said that it is appropriate to keep

fear dominate during life with health, so that there be no shortcoming in being obedient. And when comes the time to die, it is better to let hope dominate, because the strength to do what should have been done is not there anymore and there is nothing left to do except hope for the mercy of Allah Ta'ālā. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

And some researchers among scholars have said that the purpose is to hold on to the straight path of religion and be constant in obedience to Allah Ta'ālā. Then, the temperaments and tastes of human beings differ. Some achieve this station of fortitude and constancy in obedience by keeping fear as the dominant factor. Others achieve these by keeping love and hope as dominating factors. So, whoever finds help to achieve this purpose through either of these two options, should try to achieve it through that option.

To summarize the comments made about *Du'a'*, it can be said that the first verse tells us about two rules of etiquette relating to *Du'a'*: (1) That it be with humility and submission, and (2) that it be secret and low-voiced. These two qualities belong to the outward human physique - because "*taqarru*" suggests that one should, while making *Du'a'*, assume the looks and manners of someone weak, helpless and needy and should never allow it to be proud, arrogant or seemingly need-free. Then, that it be secret also relates to one's speech through the mouth and tongue.

As for the spiritual etiquette of *Du'a'* as given in this verse, there are two rules to be followed. These relate to the human heart. They require that the person making the *Du'a'* should feel the danger in his heart that his *Du'a'* may, perhaps, remain unanswered while, at the same time, he should also hope that his *Du'a'* may be answered - because becoming careless about one's errors and sins is contrary to 'Imān (faith) and losing hope in the infinite mercy of Allah Ta'ālā is Kufr (disbelief). Both are impermissible extremes. The hope that a prayer will be answered can be entertained only when one keeps in between the two states of fear and hope.

Then, at the end of the verse, it was said: إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (Surely, the mercy of Allah is close to the good in deeds). The hint given here is that, though there should be the two states of fear and hope present while making a *Du'a'*, but, out of the two states, the option of

hope is the weightier option - because the prayer is being made to the Lord of all the worlds the extent of Whose mercy cannot be conceived, and in whose generosity and favour there is no shortage or reluctance. He can answer the *Du'ā'* of the worst of offenders, even the *Du'ā'* of the Satan himself. Of course, should there be a danger of *Du'ā'* remaining unanswered, that could only be possible on account of one's own misdeeds or due to the hanging curse of sins - because being good in deeds is necessary to become close to the mercy of Allah Ta'ālā.

Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said that some people travel long distances, look like faqirs and raise their hands for *Du'ā'* before Allah Ta'ālā, but ḥarām is their food and ḥarām is their drink and ḥarām is their dress. So, how can a *Du'ā'* made by such a person be answered? (Muslim, Tirmidhī from Sayyidnā Abī Hurairah)

According to another Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: The prayer of a servant of Allah keeps finding acceptance until such time that he does not pray for some sin or for the severance of some relationship - and that he does not make haste. The noble Companion asked about the meaning of 'making haste.' He said: It means that one may think - here I am making a *Du'ā'* for all this time and it has not been answered yet - until he becomes disappointed and stops making *Du'ā'*. (Muslim, Tirmidhī)

According to yet another Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Whenever you make *Du'ā'* before Allah Ta'ālā, do it in a state when you have no doubt about its being answered.

It means that one should keep his or her sight on the most extensive mercy of Allah Ta'ālā and let the heart believe that the prayer being made shall be answered. This is not contrary to the danger one may feel that his or her sins may become an impediment in the acceptance of one's *Du'ā'*. صلى الله تعالى على نبينا وسلم

Verses 57 - 58

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُرْسِلُ الرِّيحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَقَلَّتْ سَحَابًا ثِقَالًا سُقْنَهُ لِبَلَدٍ مَّيِّتٍ فَأَنْزَلْنَا بِهِ الْمَاءَ فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ نُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتَىٰ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ

﴿٥٧﴾ وَالْبَلَدُ الطَّيِّبُ يَخْرُجُ نَبَاتُهُ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ وَالَّذِي خَبثَ لَا
يَخْرُجُ إِلَّا نَكِدًا كَذَلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾

And He is the One who sends the winds carrying good news before His blessings, until when they lift up the heavy clouds, We drive them to a dead land, then there We pour down the water, then, with it We bring forth of all the fruits. This is how We bring forth all the dead, so that you may observe advice. [57]

As for the good land, its vegetation comes out with the permission of its Lord. And that which is bad does not grow except what is bad. Thus We alternate the verses for a people who pay gratitude. [58]

Commentary

In previous verses, Allah Ta'ālā has mentioned some of His major and particular blessings. By pointing out to the creation of the heavens and the earth, the day and night, and the sun, moon and stars and how they serve human beings, the lesson driven home is that there is no power other than the sacred Being of Allah Ta'ālā to take care of our needs and comforts, then, it becomes necessary that we should pray to none but Him for everything we need and take this turning to Him as the key of our success.

Also mentioned in the first of the present verses are some other important blessings of this nature on which depends the existence and survival of human beings and the entire creation of the earth, for example, the rains and the trees, and farmlands and its produce. The difference is that the previous verses mentioned blessings relating to the upper domain while the present ones belong to the lower. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

Something special has been identified in the second verse where it is said that these great Divine blessings are, though common to all parts of the earth - as rains, when they come, fall on rivers and mountains and on good and bad lands alike - but, what grows from the earth grows only from the land which has the quality to make it grow. Rocky and sandy lands do not derive benefit from these rains.

The conclusion drawn from the first verse is that the sacred Being which enables dead land to live again should have no problems in making human beings who once lived, then died, come to life once again. The conclusion so drawn is very clear. Then, there is another conclusion drawn from the second verse. It tells us that the guidance coming from Allah Ta'ālā, the revealed Books, the blessed prophets, and the teachings and training undertaken by their deputies, the '*Ulamā*' and *Mashāikh* are like the rains, common to every human being. But, the way every land does not derive benefit from the mercy of rains, very similarly, the benefit of this spiritual rain is derived by those who have the ability to absorb it. As for those whose hearts are like rocky and sandy land not having the ability to absorb it and make growth possible, they would keep sticking to their ways of error despite clear guidance and signs and scriptures.

The conclusion thus drawn comes from the last sentence of the second verse which says: كَذَلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْأَيَّامَ لِقَوْمٍ يَشْكُرُونَ (Thus We alternate the verses for a people who pay gratitude). The sense is that the statement made was, though for everyone, yet, in the ultimate consequence, it proved beneficial only for those who had the capacity for it and realized its worth and value. Thus, the two verses quoted here cover the subject of human origin and return. Now, we can go to a fuller explanation of these two verses. The first verse begins by saying: وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُرْسِلُ الرِّيحَ بُشْرًا مِّنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ (And He is the One who sends the winds carrying good news before His blessings). Here, the word: رِيح (*ar-riyāh*) is the plural form of *rīḥ* which means the wind, and '*bushran*' means good news or glad tidings, and '*rahmat*' refers to the rain of mercy, that is, it is Allah Ta'ālā Himself who sends the winds to announce the good news of the coming rain of mercy.

The sense of the verse is that it is the customary practice of Allah Ta'ālā that He sends cool winds before the actual coming of rains which not only please people, but also, in a way, foretell that rains are coming much before they actually do. Therefore, these winds are a combination of two blessings. They themselves are beneficial for human beings and bracing for the creation in general. Then, they announce the rains before its coming. Human beings are a highly sensitive model of creation. Rains may stop them from doing what they

need to do. If they could naturally find out about the coming rains ahead of time, they would be able to manage things for themselves. In addition to that, one's own person and belongings are not, at all times, defended against rains. By having early indications of rains, most would be able to take protective cover for themselves and their belongings.

Then, it was said: حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَفْلَحَ سَحَابًا ثِقَالًا (until when they lift up the heavy clouds). The word: سَحَاب (saḥāb) means the cloud and: ثِقَال (thiqāl) is the plural of *thaqīl* which means heavy, that is, when the winds lift up the heavy clouds. Heavy clouds refer to clouds laden with water. They would, as if, travel riding on the shoulders of the wind, and thus, this water weighing thousands of tons comfortably rides high on the wings of the wind. How wonderful is the Divine design which uses no machines nor lets human beings slave for it. It is as simple as it can be - when Allah Ta'ālā wills, vapours from the waters start rising upwards, turn into clouds and what you have is a sky-filling plane carrying a cargo of hundreds and thousands of gallons of water in its holds flying on the cushion of winds towards higher altitudes!

After that, it was said: سَفَنَهُمْ إِلَىٰ بَلَدٍ مَّيِّتٍ (We drive them to a dead land). The word: سَوَّىٰ (sauq) means to drive, herd or urge on towards a desired destination, and 'balad' means a town or habitation, and 'mayyit' means dead.

The verse, thus, means: 'When the winds lifted the heavy clouds up, We drove the clouds to a dead town.' Dead town refers to the habitation rendered desolate because of an scarcity of water. That a town or habitation has been named here in place of a common open land is appropriate in view of the real purpose of sending the rain because it is designed to feed the thirsty land and enable it to produce what human beings need. The place to do so would be a habitated area, not an inhabited forest primarily where the growth of vegetation is less likely to serve the initial purpose.

Upto this point, the description in the quoted verses proves the following: (1) That rains come through clouds, as commonly observed. This tells us that verses in which raining from the sky has been mentioned, there too, the word: سَمَاء (samā') refers to clouds. Then, not improbable is the likelihood that clouds originate directly from the skies -

as opposed to monsoons originating from the waters - and bring rains. (2) That clouds go in a particular direction and over a particular land area is something related directly to Divine command. It is He who gives the command for rains to fall when He wills, where He wills and as much as He wills. The clouds implement the Divine command.

It is something observed everywhere. There are occasions when a town or habitation would have heavy over-head clouds, and they would very much be in need of rains, but the clouds would not let them have even a drop of water. Instead, it would go to a town or habitation for which there is a quota of water as Divinely determined, and it would be only there that it would rain. No one has the ability or the daring to acquire water from these clouds at any other place, other than the town or habitation earmarked to have it.

Weather scientists have determined rules about the movement of monsoons based on which they can tell the course of a monsoon rising from the waters of the sea and identify where and how much it would rain. There are meteorological bureaus set up for this purpose in many countries. But, experience shows that news released by these departments frequently turn out to be contrary to fact. When what is contrary is the Divine command itself, their rules become ineffective. Winds and rain-laden clouds turn towards somewhere else, contrary to foretold news, and weather experts cannot do much about it.

In addition to that, any other rules and regulations proposed by meteorologists, they too are not contrary to the proposition that the movement of clouds obeys the Divine command - because it is the customary practice of Allah Ta'ālā that, in all affairs of this world, the Divine command manifests itself from behind the curtains of physical causes. Human beings pick up these very causes and formulate some rule or regulation based on them. Otherwise, reality lies elsewhere.

After that, it was said: فَاتَّزَلْنَاهُ بِهٖ الْمَاءَ فَأَخْرَجْنَا مِنْهُ مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ (We pour down water, then, with it We bring forth of all the fruits).

And then, at the end of the verse, it was said: كَذٰلِكَ نُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتٰى لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُوْنَ (This is how We bring forth all the dead [on the day of Qiyaamah], so that you may observe advice). Thus, the sense of the verse is: 'The way We have given new life to the dead land and have brought out from it

trees, flowers and fruits, similarly, on the day of Qiyāmah, We shall have the dead rise once again after their having been dead. And these examples have been set forth so that you would have the opportunity to reflect and deliberate.

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'صُور (Ṣūr : Horn) will be blown twice on the day of Qiyāmah. On the first Ṣūr, the whole world will perish. Nothing will remain alive. On the second Ṣūr, a new world will come into being. The dead will become alive.' The Ḥadīth also mentions 'an interval of forty years between the two blowings of the Ṣūr and rains would continue to fall throughout these forty years. During this period, the body parts of every dead human being and animal will become assembled into them giving everyone a complete skeleton. Then, at the time of the blowing of the second Ṣūr, Rūḥ (soul) will enter these corpses. They will rise alive.' A major portion of this narration can be seen in Al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Some portions have been taken from Kitāb al-Ba'th of Ibn Abī Dāwūd.

Stated in the second verse (58) is: وَالْبَلَدُ الطَّيِّبُ يَخْرُجُ نَبَاتُهُ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ وَالَّذِي خَبُثَ لَا يَخْرُجُ إِلَّا نَكَبًا (As for the good land, its vegetation comes out with the permission of its Lord. And that which is bad does not grow except what is bad). The word: نَكَبًا (*nakid*) refers to something useless and scanty both. The sense of the verse is that the mercy of rain, when it comes, is common to every town and land, but lands are of two kinds in terms of their yield and outcome. First, there is good land which helps growth. From it come flowers and fruits and many other benefits. Then, there is the hard, barren or saline land which lacks the ability to grow plants. First of all, not much grows on such a land, and if something does grow there, its quantity remains insignificant, and even this quantity is useless and bad.

At the end of the verse, it was said: كَذَلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَشْكُرُونَ (Thus We alternate the verses for a people who pay gratitude).

The hint given here is: Though the open blessing of Allah's guidance and His clear 'Āyāt is open and common to all human beings very much like the general mercy of rain, but every land does not derive benefit from the rain and, similarly, every human being does not derive benefit from Divine guidance. Rather, the benefit is derived by

only those who are grateful for what they receive and recognize its real worth and value.

Verses 59 - 64

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَقَالَ يَتَّبِعُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ
مِّنْ إِلَهِ غَيْرُهُ ۖ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٥٩﴾
قَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْ قَوْمِهِ إِنَّا لَنَرُوكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٦٠﴾ قَالَ يَتَّبِعُوا
لَيْسَ بِي ضَلَالٌ وَلَكِنِّي رَسُولٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٦١﴾ أُبَلِّغُكُمْ
رِسَالَاتِ رَبِّي وَأُنصَحُ لَكُمْ وَأَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾
أَوْ عَجِبْتُمْ أَن جَاءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَلَىٰ رَجُلٍ مِّنكُمْ
لِيُنذِرَكُمْ وَلِتَتَّقُوا ۖ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخَذْنَاهُ
وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ فِي الْفُلْكِ وَأَغْرَقْنَا الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا إِنَّهُمْ
كَانُوا قَوْمًا عَمِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾

Surely We sent Nūḥ to his people. Then he said, "O my people, worship Allah. For you there is no god other than Him. I fear for you the punishment of a great Day." [59]

The chiefs of his people said, "Indeed we see you in an obvious error." [60] He said, "O my people, there is no error in me, but I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds. [61] I convey to you the messages of my Lord and wish you betterment, and I know from Allah what you do not know." [62] Do you wonder that an advice from your Lord has come to you through a man from among you, so that he may warn you and that you may fear Allah, and that you may be blessed with mercy?" [63]

Then, they belied him, so, We saved him, and those with him in the Ark, and drowned those who belied Our signs. Certainly, they were a blind people. [64]

Commentary

Described from the beginning of Sūrah al-A'raf upto this point were

the subjects of *Tauḥīd*, *Risālah* and *'Ākhirah*, the basic principles of Islam. These were proved and affirmed in different ways, people were persuaded to follow them and warned against taking opposing stands. Then, as a corollary, the guiles of Satan which make people go astray were mentioned. Now, from the eighth Rukū' (section) to almost the end of the Sūrah, there is a description of some prophets, may peace be upon them, and of their communities. The subject dealt with here consists of the commonly pursued principles of *Tauḥīd*, *Risālah* and *'Ākhirah*. They all invited their respective communities towards these universal principles, gave them the good news of rewards for those who believed in them, and warned them of punishments for refusing to believe and the sad end they would have for doing so. This description takes about fourteen sections, where hundreds of basic and subsidiary rulings appear as a corollary. Thus, the present communities were given an opportunity to learn a lesson from the sad end of past communities - and, for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, this became a source of comfort that this was how things have been with all other prophets.

The verses appearing above take a whole Rukū' of Sūrah al-A'raf. It describes the mission of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and the state of the community to which he was sent.

Though, in the chain of prophets, the first prophet is Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام, but his was not the time for confrontation against disbelief and error. In the religious code given to him, most of the injunctions were related to habitation of the land and management of human needs. Disbelief and disbelievers just did not exist. The confrontation against Kufr (disbelief) and Shirk (associating partners in the Divinity of Allah) began with Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. He is, in terms of the mission of prophethood and a code of religious laws, the first *rasūl* of Allah. In addition to that, people who survived after the drowning of the whole world during the great flood or deluge, were Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and those with him in the Ark. It was through him that the new world was populated. Therefore, he is also referred to as the junior Adam. This is the reason why he appears first in this story of prophets which has a description of his nine hundred and fifty year long prophetic struggle in contrast to the crooked ways of the majority in his community, as a result of which, all except a few believers were

drowned. Details follow.

The first verse begins with the words: لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ (Surely We sent Nūḥ to his people).

Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام is in the eighth generation of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام. According to a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه appearing in Mustadrak of Ḥākim, there is an interval of ten Qarn between Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام and Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. The same has been reported by Ṭabarānī as based on a Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Dharr رضي الله عنه (Tafsīr Maḥzarī). A Qarn generally means one hundred years. Therefore, the interval of time between these two comes to be one thousand years according to this narration. Ibn Jarīr has reported that Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام was born eight hundred and twenty six years after the death of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام, and according to a clear statement of the Qur'ān, he reached an age of nine hundred and fifty years - and according to a Ḥadīth, the age of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام is nine hundred and sixty years. Thus, the time from the birth of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام to the death of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام comes to be a total of two thousand eight hundred and fifty six years. (Maḥzarī) In some narrations, the real name of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام appears as Shākīr while in some others it has been given as Sakan, and 'Abd al-Ghaffār, in still others.

Whether his time is before or after Sayyidnā Idrīs عليه السلام - Enoch - has been debated. The majority of the Ṣaḥabah have said that Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام has appeared before Sayyidnā Idrīs عليه السلام (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

Based on a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه reports Mustadrak of Ḥākim that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Nūḥ عليه السلام was invested with prophethood at the age of forty years and, after the Flood, he lived for sixty years.

The verse of the Qur'ān: لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ (Surely, We sent Nūḥ to his people) proves that Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام was sent as a prophet only to his people. It was not common to the whole world. His people lived in Iraq. They were outwardly civilized but were involved in Shirk. The call given by Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام to his people was: يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُ ط إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (O my people, worship Allah.

For you there is no god other than Him. I fear for you the punishment of a great Day). In the first sentence, the invitation given is to worship Allah Ta'ālā, which is the essence of the principle. In the second sentence, people have been persuaded to shun Shirk and Kufr, something which had spread out like some epidemic among these people. In the third sentence, the purpose is to warn people against the danger of that great punishment which they would have to face in the event they were to do otherwise. This 'great punishment' could mean the punishment of the Hereafter, and the punishment of the Flood in the present world too. (Tafsīr Kabīr)

In reply, his people said: *إِنَّا لَنَرَاكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ* ("Indeed we see you in an obvious error"). The word: *مَلَأَ* (*malā*) is used for chiefs, headmen and empowered elders of a community or group. The sense of what his people said in response to his call was to tell him that he was actually trying to wean them away from their ancestral faith and that all these ideas of rising on some last day and being rewarded or punished were nothing but superstition.

These were harsh words. But, the reply given by Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام carries an eloquent diction fit for a prophet. Here, he is leaving a trail for all carriers of *da'wah*, preachers and reformers, as a signpost of education and guidance. Here, he is not responding on the same wave length, not anger against anger, but trying to remove their doubts in the simplest possible words: *قَالَ يَقُومُ لَيْسَ بِي ضَلَالٌ وَلَكِنِّي رَسُولٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ* . *أُبَلِّغُكُمْ رِسَالِ رَبِّي وَأَنصَحُ لَكُمْ وَأَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ* . (He said, "O my people, there is no error in me, but I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds. I convey to you the messages of my Lord and wish your betterment, and I know from Allah what you do not know). In other words, what Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام is telling his people was that 'their accusation that he has gone astray was not true. However, the fact remained that he was not bound by their ancestral customs rooted in ignorance like them. Instead of that, he was sent as a messenger from the Lord of all the worlds. Whatever he was telling them was under the guidance of his Lord. His sole mission was to convey the message of Allah Ta'ālā to them which was in their interest and for their good. This was not for any benefit of Allah Ta'ālā nor did it serve any personal interest of his own.' The expression: 'Lord of all the worlds' in this statement strikes

decisively against believing in Shirk by associating others with the pristine Divinity of Allah Ta'ālā. Once the spirit of this assertion is understood, no god or goddess of any denomination can stand valid as objects of worship. After that, he said that the doubts they had about the punishment of the Last Day were because of their lack of awareness - and, as for him, he was blessed with certitude in this matter by Allah Ta'ālā.

After that comes the reply to the other doubt expressed by them. This has been stated clearly in Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn: **مَا هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَتَفَضَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَأَنْزَلَ مَلَائِكَةً** عليه السلام, that is, the people of Sayyidna Nūḥ came up with another doubt about the call given by him. They thought that he was only human, a man like them who ate, drank, slept and woke as they did. How could they take him as their leader? Had Allah wanted to send a message for them, he should have sent angels with it whose distinction and greatness would have impressed them. Now, what they saw here was no more than that there was someone from among their own race and community who wished to establish his superiority over them - 23:24.

Here, the answer given was: **أَوْعَجِبْتُمْ أَنْ جَاءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَلَى رَجُلٍ مِّنكُمْ لِيُنذِرَكُمْ** (Do you wonder that an advice from your Lord has come to you through a man from among you, so that he may warn you and that you may fear Allah, and that you may be blessed with mercy?) [that is, his warning may lead you to stop opposing him as a result of which you may be blessed with mercy]

The substance of the argument is that the making of a human being a messenger of Allah is not a matter of surprise. First of all, Allah Ta'ālā is the Absolute Master. Bestowing on someone the status of a prophet or messenger is His exclusive domain. It is He who does it at His will. No one is in a position to dare have it otherwise. In addition to that, a little deliberation will make it clear that the purpose of sending a prophet or messenger to guide human beings can only be achieved through a human being. This is a mission angels cannot perform.

The reason is that the purpose of prophethood is to bring people round to believe in and obey Allah Ta'ālā and save them from harsh consequences of their opposition to His injunctions - and this can only

be possible when a person from their own kind presents before them a model of the desired conduct and shows before them that it is quite possible to worship Allah and obey His injunctions even with the fulfillment of inherent human needs and desires. If this call was brought forth by angels and they were to put their model before people, it is obvious that people would have found it fairly convenient to say that angels are free of human desires, they are never hungry or thirsty, they never sleep, or get tired. How could they ever become like them? But, when one of their own kind, despite having common human characteristics and desires, walks amongst them as a perfect model of obedience to Divine injunctions, they would be left with no excuse.

It was to point out in this direction that it was said: *لِيُنذِرَكُمْ وَلِتَتَّقُوا* (so that he may warn you and that you may fear Allah). In other words, it means that a person whose warning can make people have fear could only be the one who is of their kind and is an epitome of human traits like them. This is not an unusual doubt for the disbelievers of many communities who have questioned the propriety of having a human being as prophet or messenger. This is the answer given by the Qur'ān to all such doubts. It is certainly regrettable that, despite so many clarifications of the Qur'ān, there are people who would dare going to the limit of denying the 'human-ness' of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. But, the problem with the ignorant among human beings is that they would not understand this reality and would simply refuse to accept the superiority of anyone from their own kind. This is why they would nurse hatred for their contemporary *Awliyā'* (men of Allah) and '*Ulamā'* (highly trained and trustworthy religious scholars who practice what they teach) and look down upon them because of their contemporaneity. This has always been the trademark of the ignorant.

When this paternal and well-wishing approach of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام in reply to the heart-rending words said by his addressees made no effect on these unfeeling people who turned blind to truth and kept belying it, then, Allah Ta'ālā sent down upon them the punishment of Flood. It was said: *كَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخْتَبَيْنَاهُ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ فِي الْفُلْكِ وَأَغْرَقْنَا الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا. إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا عَمِينَ* (Then, they belied him [ignoring his good counsel totally], so [as a consequence], we saved him, and those with him in the Ark, and

drowned those who had belied Our signs. Certainly, they were a blind people).

The story of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and the full account of the drowning of his people and the deliverance of the people in the Ark appears in Sūrah Hūd and Sūrah Nūḥ. Given at this place is its gist as appropriate to the occasion. Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Aslam رحمه الله says: When the punishment of Flood overtook the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, they were at the prime of their population and power. The lands and mountains of Iraq were becoming insufficient for their rising numbers. It should be kept in mind that it is a customary practice of Allah Ta'ālā since ever that He would keep granting respite to the disobedient. He would send His punishment over them at a time when they have reached the highest peak of their numbers, power and wealth, and become, so to say, drunk with this state of their life. (Ibn Kathīr)

As for the number of people in the Ark of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, reports differ. Ibn Kathīr, through a narration of Ibn Abī Ḥatīm, reports from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه that there were eighty people. One of them was called Jurhum. He spoke Arabic. (Ibn Kathīr)

Some narrations have given the detail that there were forty men and forty women in the Ark. After the Flood, the place in Mosul, Iraq where they came to stay became known as Thamānūn (eighty).

To sum up, the introduction of a brief account of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام at this place aims to tell us three things: (1) That the *da'wah* of all past prophets and their basic articles of faith were one. (2) That Allah Ta'ālā supports his appointed messengers in strikingly wonderful ways when they would not have the least danger to their security even after having been surrounded by a Flood rising as high as the peaks of mountains. (3) Then, it was made absolutely clear that belying the noble prophets of Allah, may peace be upon them, amounted to inviting Divine punishment. The warning is still valid. So, let it not be forgotten that the way past communities were overtaken by punishment because of their belying of the prophets, a similar fate could overtake their modern counterparts - on this count, they could do better by not becoming heedless and fear-free.

Verses 65 - 72

وَالِى عَادِ أَخَاهُمْ هُودًا ۖ قَالَ يَقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ إِلَهِ
غَيْرُهُ ۖ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾ قَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ إِنَّا
لَنَرَاكَ فِي سَفَاهَةٍ وَإِنَّا لَنُظَنُّكَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾ قَالَ يَقَوْمِ
لَيْسَ بِي سَفَاهَةٌ وَلَكِنِّي رَسُولٌ مِّنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾
أُبَلِّغُكُمْ رِسَالَتِ رَبِّي وَأَنَا لَكُمْ نَاصِحٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿٦٨﴾ أَوْعَجِبْتُمْ أَنُ
جَاءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِّنْ رَبِّكُمْ عَلَى رَجُلٍ مِّنْكُمْ لِيُنذِرَكُمْ ۖ وَادْكُرُوا
إِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ مِنْ بَعْدِ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَزَادَكُمْ فِي الْخَلْقِ
بَضْطَةً ۖ فَادْكُرُوا الْآءَ اللَّهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾ قَالُوا أَجِئْنَا
لِنُعْبُدَ اللَّهَ وَحْدَهُ وَنَذَرَمَا كَانَ يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا ۖ فَاتَّبَعْنَا مَا تَتَّبَعْنَا
إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٧٠﴾ قَالَ قَدْ وَقَعَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ رَبِّكُمْ
رَجْسٌ وَغَضَبٌ ۖ أَتُجَادِلُونَنِي فِي أَسْمَاءٍ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنْتُمْ
وَأَبَاؤُكُمْ مَّا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ ۖ فَانْتَظِرُوا إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ
مِّنَ الْمُنْتَظِرِينَ ﴿٧١﴾ فَأَنْجَيْنَاهُ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا وَقَطَعْنَا
دَابِرَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَمَا كَانُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾

And to 'Ād (We sent) their brother, Hūd. He said, "O my people, worship Allah; you have no god other than Him. So, do you not fear Allah?" [65]

Said the chiefs of his people who disbelieved, "Indeed, we see you in foolishness, and we certainly believe you to be one of the liars." [66]

He said, "O my people, there is no foolishness in me, but I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds. [67] I convey to you the messages of my Lord; and for you, I am an honest adviser. [68] Do you wonder that an advice from your Lord has come to you through a man from among you, so that he may warn you? And remember when He made you successors after the people of

Nūḥ and gave you increased strength in physique. So, be mindful of the bounties of Allah, so that you may be successful.” [69]

They said, “Have you come to us in order that we should worship Allah alone and give up what our fathers used to worship? Now, bring us what you threaten us with, if you are one of the truthful.” [70]

He said, “The punishment and the anger from your Lord have fallen upon you. Do you quarrel with me about names coined by you and your fathers, for which Allah has sent down no authority? So, wait. I am one of those waiting, with you.” [71]

So, We saved him and those with him out of mercy from Us, and We eradicated those who belied Our signs. And they were not believers. [72]

Commentary

A Brief History of ‘Ād and Thamūd

‘Ād is the name of a person who is in the fifth generation after Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and is among the progeny of his son Sām. Then, his progeny, and his people, came to be known by the name of ‘Ād. In the Holy Qur’ān, ‘Ād also appears with the words: عَادُ الْأُولَى (‘Ād al-‘ulā: ‘Ād, the First) and also: إِرَامُ دَاتِ الْعِمَادِ (that is, of the city of Iram with lofty pillars; or tall like lofty pillars - 89:7) which tells us that the people of ‘Ād are also known in association with the name of Iram, and that with ‘Ād I, there is some ‘Ād II as well. In this investigation, commentators and historians differ. The better known proposition is that Iram is the name of the grandfather of ‘Ād. This ‘Ād is among the children of ‘Aus who was his son, and is known as ‘Ād I. His second son, جَثْوُ (Jathw) had a son. His name was Thamūd. He is called ‘Ād II. The outcome is that ‘Ād and Thamūd are both two branches of Iram. One of them is called ‘Ād I and the other is known as Thamūd or ‘Ād II, and the word: إِرَامُ (Iram) is common to both ‘Ād and Thamūd.

Some commentators have said that at the time when the punishment overtook the people of ‘Ād, a deputation of theirs was on a visit to Makkah al-Mu‘zzamah, which remained safe from this punishment. It is known as the other ‘Ād. (Bayān al-Qur’ān)

Hūd عليه السلام is the name of a prophet. He is also in the fifth generation of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, and is among the progeny of Sām. The geneological tree of the people of 'Ād and Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام converges on Sām in the fifth generation. Therefore, Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام is a lineal brother to 'Ād. That is why it was said: أَخَاهُم هُودًا (their brother Hūd - 65)

The people of 'Ād had thirteen families. Their habitations were spread out from Oman to Hadramaut and Yaman. Their lands were fertile. Gardens were abundant. To live they constructed mansions and palaces. They were tall and heavily built. This is what the expression: زَادَكُمْ فِي الْخَلْقِ بَسْطَةً (gave you increased strength in physique - 69) means. Allah Ta'ālā had opened the doors of His blessing upon them. But, their crooked thinking made these very blessings a curse for them. They became so intoxicated with their power and grandeur that they started boasting: مَنْ أَشَدُّ مِنَّا قُوَّةً (Who is superior to us in strength?- 41:15). How strange of them that they took no notice of their Lord and the Lord of the worlds bathed in whose blessings they all were and went on to sink themselves into the worship of idols carved out of rocks!

The Lineage of Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام and Some Glimpses of the Background

These were the people for whose guidance Allah Ta'ālā sent Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام as a prophet who was from their family. The famous authority on Arab geneology, Abū al-Barakāt al-Jaunī has written that the name of the son of Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام is Ya'rub ibn Qaḥṭān who went to live in Yaman. Yamani people are his progeny. The Arabic language originated from him and it was this correspondence with 'Ya'rub' that the language was called Arabic and its speakers, the Arabs. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

But, the truth of the matter is that the Arabic language was there since the time of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. In his Ark, he had a companion called Jurhum. He spoke Arabic (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ) The populating of Makkah al-Mu'azzamah started from this very Jurhum. However, it is possible that the origination of the Arabic language took place in Yaman through Ya'rub ibn Qaḥṭān and this may be what Abū al-Barakat has meant.

Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام induced the people of 'Ād to forsake idol-worship and take to pure monotheism and shun injustice and oppression and practice moderation and justice. But, these people were drunk with power and wealth. They did not listen to him. Consequently, the first punishment that visited them was that rains stopped coming for a full three years in succession. Lands became deserts. Gardens turned into dead wood. But, these people still kept sticking to *Shirk* and idol-worship. Then, came another punishment. A severe wind storm overtook them. It continued for eight days and seven nights. What remained of their gardens and mansions and palaces was levelled to the ground. Their men and animals went up into the air and zoomed back hitting the floor on their heads. Thus, the people of 'Ād were eliminated to the last man. The sense of the expression: وَطَعْنَا دَابِرَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا (and we eradicated those who belied Our signs) in this verse, as determined by some commentators, is that all those people present at that time were totally destroyed. Some other commentators have said that it means that Allah Ta'ālā cut off the lineal root of the people of 'Ād for the future as well.

When the punishment for not listening to Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام and insisting on Kufr and Shirk came down upon his people, he and his companions took refuge in an open area enclosed with stakes. It was strange that the stormy winds which were making palaces collapse on their columns would suddenly change pace and enter this enclosure gently. Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام and his companions kept sitting peacefully where they were even during the descension of the punishment without having to face any inconvenience. It was after the destruction of the people of 'Ād that they moved to Makkah al-Mu'azzamah where they lived until death. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

That the punishment for the people of 'Ād came in the form of a wind storm has been explicitly and categorically mentioned in the Qur'ān. Then, there is the statement in Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn which follows the narration of the story of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام: ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ: عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام that is, then, after them, We brought forth another generation - 23:31. It seems obvious that another generation here means the people of 'Ād. Then, after having given a view of their word and deed, it was said: فَآخَذْتَهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ بِالْحَقِّ (an extremely harsh and horrifying sound [Aṣ-

Ṣaiḥah] took them - 23:41). Based on this statement of the Qur'an, some commentators have said that the punishment which was set upon the people of 'Ād was that of Aṣ-Ṣaiḥah (extremely harsh and screaming sound). But, there is no contradiction here. It is possible that they both came to pass.

This was a brief account relating to the people of 'Ād and Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام. Its details as given in the words of the Qur'an follow.

(1) Said in the first verse (65) was: **وَالِىٰ عَادِ أَخَاهُمْ هُودًا، قَالَ يَقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَهِ غَيْرُهُ، أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ** (And to 'Ād [We sent] their brother, Hūd. He said, "O my people, worship Allah; you have no god other than Him. So, do you not fear Allah?").

The grave punishment sent upon the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام much before the people of 'Ād was still alive in the minds of the people of his time. Therefore, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام had no need to describe the severity and gravity of punishment sent upon disobedient people. He considered it quite sufficient to say: Do you not fear Allah?

(2) In the second verse (66), it was said: **قَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ إِنَّا لَنَرُّكَ فَيَ سَافَهَةٍ وَإِنَّا لَنُظُنُّكَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ** (Said the chiefs of his people who disbelieved, "Indeed, We see you in foolishness, and we certainly believe you to be one of the liars." This stance taken in opposition here resembles the one taken by the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. The only difference is that of some words. Its reply which appears in verses 67 and 68 is nearly the same as given by Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام - 61-63.

(3) Once again, the objection of the people of 'Ād mentioned in the fifth verse (69) is the same as raised by the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام before them - that is, 'how can we take a human being like us as our superior? Had it been an angel, may be we would have done that.' In answer to this what the Qur'an has mentioned is the reply given by Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام to his people - where he had said that there was nothing to be surprised about the fact that a human being comes to people as the prophet or messenger of Allah to put His fear in their hearts, because it is a human being who can convince other human beings effectively.

After that they were reminded of the blessings Allah Ta'ālā had bestowed upon them. It was said: **وَأَذْكُرُوا إِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ مِنْ بَعْدِ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَزَادَكُمْ فِى الْخَلْقِ بَصُطَةً**

فَاذْكُرُوا آلَاءَ اللَّهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (And remember when He made you successors after the people of Nūḥ and gave you increased strength in physique).

Remembering these blessings would have been for their own good, but wicked and intoxicated with power and wealth as they were, they paid no heed and gave a reply which was no different from what is generally given by people who have gone astray. They said that if Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام was trying to wean them away from the faith of their ancestors and hoping that they would abandon their idols and come around to believing in just one God, then, this they would never be able to do. As for the warning of punishment he was giving to them, they would say: go ahead and bring it upon us, if you are telling the truth.

(4) The sixth verse (70) contains the answer given by Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام. He told them that, in view of their contumacy and lack of good sense, the wrath and punishment of Allah would have not remained far and may come sooner than they expect. So, this was a matter of waiting. Let them wait for it, so shall he do. It would be noticed that the provoking reply given by his people prompted Sayyidnā Hūd to give a suitable answer which included the news that the punishment they were looking for was to come soon. But, he was a prophet. His paternal affection and the desire to do good to them forced him to say during the course of his reply that he regretted that his people had taken things without sense and life as objects of worship without having any proof from reason or revelation to support their position. Now they had become so staunch in their devotion to the false that they had started quarreling with him, a prophet of Allah.

(5) In the last verse (72) it was said that the final outcome of the entire struggle of Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام against the contumacy of the people of 'Ad was that Allah Ta'ālā kept Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام and those who had believed in him safe from the punishment and cut off the root of those who had belied him - and they were not of those who would have believed.

This story leaves a trail of good counsel. It reminds heedless human beings to keep remembering Allah and take to a life style which is marked with obedience to Him. Then, to those who elect to reject honest advice and refuse to learn a lesson, it shows what to expect in

the end. And, as for preachers and reformers, it is a mirror of the prophetic method of communication in *Tablīgh* and *Islāh*.

Verses 73 - 76

وَالِى ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا قَالَ يَاقُومُ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ قَدْ جَاءَتْكُم بَيِّنَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ هَذِهِ نَاقَةُ اللَّهِ لَكُمْ آيَةٌ فَذَرُوهَا تَأْكُلْ فِي أَرْضِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَمَسُّوهَا بِسُوءٍ فَيَأْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابُ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٧٣﴾ وَادْكُرُوا إِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ مِن بَعْدِ عَادٍ وَبَوَّأَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ تَتَّخِذُونَ مِنْ سُهُولِهَا قُصُورًا وَتَنْحِتُونَ الْجِبَالَ بُيُوتًا فَاذْكُرُوا آلَاءَ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْتُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٧٤﴾ قَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَضَعُّوا لِمَنْ آمَنَ مِنْهُمْ أَتَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ صَالِحًا مُّرْسَلٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ قَالُوا إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلَ بِهِ مُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾ قَالَ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا إِنَّا بِالَّذِي آمَنْتُمْ بِهِ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾

And to Thamūd, (We sent) their brother, Ṣāliḥ. He said, "O my people, worship Allah. You have no god other than Him. There has come to you a clear sign from your Lord. This is the she-camel of Allah, a sign for you. So, leave her to eat on the earth of Allah and do not touch her with mischief, lest a painful punishment should seize you. [73] And remember when He made you successors after 'Ād and lodged you on earth (whereby) you make castles in its plains and hew out the mountains into houses. So be mindful of the bounties of Allah, and do not go about the earth spreading disorder." [74]

The chiefs of his people, who were arrogant, said to the weakened, to those of them who believed, "Are you sure that Ṣāliḥ is a messenger from his Lord?" They said, "Surely, we believe in what he has been sent with." [75] Those who were arrogant said, "Surely, we disbelieve in what you believe in." [76]

Commentary

These verses tell us about Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام and his people, the Thamūd. The account of the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام has appeared earlier. Similar introductions of past prophets and their peoples, highlighting the call of truth given by prophets and the disbelief and denial of their peoples, and the terrible consequences that overtook them continue to be the main subject as far as the end of Sūrah al-A'raf.

In the first of the four verses cited above (73), it was said: **وَإِلَى ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا** (And to Thamūd, [We sent] their brother, Ṣāliḥ). Earlier, in the account given about the people of 'Ād, it was stated that 'Ād and Thamūd is the name of two persons who are among the progeny of the same grandfather. The children of these two also came to be known by their name and their two groups became two separate peoples. One of them was called the people of 'Ād and the other, the people of Thamūd. They lived in the north-western part of Arabia. Their main city was called Hījr which is now known as Madā'in Ṣāliḥ. Like the people of 'Ād, the people of Thamūd were also wealthy, powerful, brave and artistically inclined. They were skilled in sculpture and architecture. Besides making palaces on open grounds, they were known to hew out mountains and create living spaces and structures on and inside them. In his book, 'Arḍ al-Qur'ān, Maulānā Sayyid Sulaiman Nadvi has said that their architectural momentos still exist. They have Iramic and Thamūdīc inscriptions carved on them.

It generally happens that worldly wealth and high living would estrange people away from the remembrance of their Creator and the ultimate encounter with Him in the Hereafter and push them on to the ways of error - as was the case with the people of Thamūd.

Not forgotten by the world of the time, though, was the punishment of Flood that came upon the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. Then, for them, the destruction of their brethren, the people of 'Ād was current history. But, wealth and power have a pull of their own. No sooner does one affluent structure collapse on its foundation, there comes another person, another group who would raise a higher structure on the same foundation totally ignoring what had happened before. When the people of 'Ād were destroyed, the people of Thamūd in-

herited their mansions and lands and it was at the same places they erected their venues of luxury, places where their own brethren had faced destruction. And as if this was not enough, they started indulging in the same deeds as were done by the people of 'Ād. They too became heedless of their Creator and unmindful of the Hereafter only to stoop to the level of worshiping idols and associating others in the Divinity of Allah. Then, Allah Ta'ālā - in accordance with His constant practice - sent Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام as His messenger so that he would guide them on to the straight path. Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام, in terms of his lineage and country, was one of the people of Thamūd as he too came from the progeny of Sām. Therefore, the Qur'ān has called him a brother of the people of Thamūd - as in: أَخَاهُمْ صَاحِبًا (their brother, Ṣāliḥ - 73). The call given by Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام to his people is no different from the call messengers from Sayyidnā Adam عليه السلام to the last of them have been giving all along - as mentioned in the Qur'ān: وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ (We have sent to every community a messenger so that he tells them to worship Allah and shun idols - 16:36). This is what Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام said to his people, just as it was done by past prophets: يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ (O my people, worship Allah. You have no god other than Him).

Then, along with it, he also said: فَدَجَّاءُكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ that is, now there has come to you from your Lord a very clear sign. This 'sign' refers to the unusual she-camel which finds a brief mention in the present verse while details appear in different Sūrahs of the Qur'ān. The background of this event concerning the she-camel goes back to the time when Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام started preaching as a young man. He kept doing his duty until marks of old age started showing on him. He still did not seem to give up. His people became impatient with his repeated efforts to make them believe in one God. So they decided to come up with a demand which it would be impossible for him to fulfill and, as a result, they would prevail as winners of the confrontation. The demand that they made was: If you are really a messenger of Allah, make a she-camel come out from Katibah, this hill of ours, and it has to be in its tenth month of pregnancy while being strong and healthy.

The first thing Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام did was to take a pledge

from them. He asked them if he fulfilled this demand of theirs, would they all believe in him and in his Da'wah. When all of them made a compact, Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام made two *raka'at* of Ṣalāh and made a *Du'a'* before Allah Ta'ālā: For You nothing is difficult. Let their demand be fulfilled. Soon after the *Du'a'*, there was a rumble in the hill, a big rock blasted out, and out came a she-camel as demanded.

Seeing this mind-boggling miracle of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام, some from among those people became believers instantly. As for the rest of them, they too decided to enter the fold of faith they have been rejecting upto that time. But, some of their chiefs who were the real promoters of idol-worship, talked them out of it. When Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام saw that his people had broken the pledge, he was concerned for them. The danger was that they might be subjected to punishment for having done that. Thus, feeling for them, he advised them not to harm the she-camel in any way, and keep protecting it, in which case, they may stay safe against the danger of punishment, otherwise, they might be seized in punishment immediately. This is the subject matter of what has been said in the following sentences of verse 73: هَذِهِ نَاقَةُ اللَّهِ لَكُمْ آيَةٌ فَذَرُوهَا تَأْكُلْ فِي أَرْضِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَمَسُّوهَا بِسَوْءٍ فَيَأْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابُ آلِيمٍ (This is the she-camel of Allah, a sign for you. So, leave her to eat on the earth of Allah and do not touch her with mischief, lest a painful punishment should seize you). This she-camel has been called 'the she-camel of Allah' because it was a proof of the perfect power of Allah and had appeared in an extraordinary manner as a miracle of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام. The expression: تَأْكُلْ فِي أَرْضِ اللَّهِ (to eat on the earth of Allah) indicates that the she-camel should be left free to eat and drink because what she would eat and drink was not owned by them. The earth belonged to Allah and He was the creator of the produce it yielded. So, she was to be left free to eat from the natural grazing grounds of the earth of Allah.

The well from which the people of Thamūd got their water was the one from which this she-camel got her share of water to drink. But, when this she-camel, an extra ordinary creation of Allah, drank her share of water, she would drink up all the water in the well. Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام had, following the Divine will, given the verdict that the she-camel would drink water from the well one day and the next day the rest of Thamūd people will have water from the well for them-

selves. It so happened that the day the she-camel drank water from the well, others would get milk from the she-camel, in lieu of water, in such quantity that they would fill out their water containers with it. This distribution of water has been referred to elsewhere in the Qur'an in the following words addressed to Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ (عليه السلام): وَبَيْنَهُمْ أَنْ الْمَاءَ: قِسْمَةٌ بَيْنَهُمْ كُلُّ شَرْبٍ مُحْتَضَرٌ (54:28) that is, the water of the well is to be divided between them, one day for the she-camel and the other for his people, and this distribution will be watched by angels lest anyone does against it.' In another verse (26:155), it was said: هَذِهِ نَاقَةُ لَهَا شَرْبٌ وَلَكُمْ شَرْبٌ يَوْمَ هَذِهِ نَاقَةُ اللَّهِ: مَعْلُومٌ that is, 'this is a she-camel of Allah; water for one day is her right and water for the other day is fixed for you'.

In the second verse (74), concern has been shown for these pledge-breaking and contumacious people lest they find themselves subjected to Divine punishment. For this purpose they have been reminded of the favours and blessings of Allah Ta'ālā upon them in the hope that they would alter their uncompromising stance and abandon their doggedness and rebellion. It was said: وَادْكُرُوا إِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ مِنْ بَعْدِ عَادٍ وَبَوَّأَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ: تَتَّخِذُونَ مِنْ سُهُولِهَا قُصُورًا وَتَنْشِجُونَ الْجِبَالَ يَبُوتًا (And remember when He made you successors after 'Ād and lodged you on earth [whereby] you make castles in its plains and hew out the mountains into houses). Here, the word: خُلَفَاءَ (*khulafā'*) is the plural of *khalīfah* which means deputy or viceregent and: قُصُورَ (*quṣūr*) is the plural of *qaṣr* which means a palace or palatial building. The word: تَنْشِجُونَ (*tanḥitūna*) is a derivation from *naḥṭ* which means sculpture or stone-carving. 'Jibāl' is the plural of *jabal* meaning a mountain. 'Buyūt' is the plural of *bayt* which denotes a house or rooms in it. The sense of the verse is that they should remember the blessing of Allah Ta'ālā that He, after the destruction of the people of 'Ād, brought them to settle in their place, gave their lands and homes to them as the new owners, and bestowed on them the skill with which they could raise big palaces on open surfaces and hew out mountains to make rooms and apartments inside them. Then, at the end of the verse, it was said: فَادْكُرُوا الْآلَاءَ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْتُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ (So be mindful of the bounties of Allah, and do not go about the earth spreading disorder).

Injunctions and Rulings

Some fundamental and subsidiary rulings emerge from the cited

verse. These are as follows:

(1) There is a unanimous agreement of all prophets, may peace be upon them all, on fundamental articles of faith and, similarly, united stand their religious codes or Shari'ahs. All of them invite towards Tauḥīd or absolutely pure monotheism as the basis of worshipping Al-lah, and they all warn against contravention of this concept which brings punishment in this world and in the Hereafter.

(2) It has happened in past communities too that the wealthy and the traditional holders of social prestige have not said yes to the call of prophets as a result of which they were disgraced and destroyed in this world and became deserving of punishment in the Hereafter as well.

(3) According to Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, this verse tells us that the blessings of Allah in this world are directed to and shared by disbelievers as well - as was the case with the people of 'Ād and Thamūd to whom Allah Ta'ālā had given great wealth and power.

(4) According to Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, once again, this verse tells us that palaces and mansions are blessings of Allah Ta'ālā and their making is permissible.

However, this is an entirely different matter that the noble prophets and the men of Allah have not favoured them as they make people heedless. The sayings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم about high-rising buildings are of this nature.

The Confrontation Between the Arrogant and the Weakened

The third (75) and the fourth (76) verses carry a dialogue between two groups of the people of Thamūd. One of these was of those who had come to believe that Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام was a prophet while the other was that of deniers and disbelievers. Says the verse: قَالُوا اللَّهُ الَّذِيْنَ اسْتَضَعُّهُمْ لَمِنْ قَوْمِهِ الَّذِيْنَ اسْتَخْبَرُوا (The chiefs of his people, who were arrogant said to the weakened, to those of them who believed).

In Tafsīr Kabīr, Imām Rāzī has said: At this place, the Holy Qur'an identifies two qualities of these two groups, but the quality or trait of the disbelievers was mentioned in the active voice (اسْتَخْبَرُوا: who were arrogant) while the quality or state of the believers was identified

through the passive (اُسْتُضْعِفُوا : the weakened). It indicates that the condition of the disbelievers - that they were arrogant - was what they chose to do at their own discretion which was questionable and blameworthy, and which finally became the cause of their punishment. As for the quality or state of believers which these people put as weak and low, it was something said by disbelievers. Their description had nothing to do with the actual state and quality of believers, something which could be considered blameworthy in any manner whatsoever. In fact, blameworthy are those who call them weak and low, and take them to be so, without any reason. After that comes the dialogue which has occurred between these two groups where the disbelievers said to the believers: 'Are you sure that Ṣāliḥ is a messenger from his Lord?'

The reply given by the believers was: 'Surely , we believe in what he has been sent with.'

The famous Tafsīr Kashshāf says: What an eloquent answer was given by the believers from the people of Thamūd when they said: 'All this debate of yours - is he a messenger of Allah or is he not? - is just not worth debating. In fact, this is obvious, foregone and certain. And equally certain is that what he says is a message brought from Allah Ta'ālā. If there is anything worth talking about here, it is: Who believes in him and who does not? So, as for us, praise be to Allah, we do believe in every word of guidance brought by him.'

But, even this eloquent answer could not soften the disbelieving people of Thamūd. They countered back coldly and arrogantly saying that they rejected what they had accepted. The lust of worldly life is merciless. So is the toxic elation of having wealth and power. May Allah Ta'ālā keep all of us protected for they become invisible curtains before human eyes which would not let those seeing eyes see the obvious.

Verses 77 - 79

فَعَقَرُوا النَّاقَةَ وَعَتَوْا عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهِمْ وَقَالُوا يُصْلِحْ أَتَيْنَا بِمَا
تَعُدُّنَا إِنَّ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ

فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جُثَمِينَ ﴿٧٨﴾ فَتَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يَاقَوْمِ لَقَدْ أَبْلَغْتُكُمْ رِسَالَةَ رَبِّي وَنَصَحْتُ لَكُمْ وَلَكِنْ لَا تُحِبُّونَ
التَّصْحِينَ ﴿٧٩﴾

Then they slaughtered the she-camel and defied the command of their Lord and said, "O Ṣāliḥ, bring us what you threaten us with, if you are one of the messengers." [77] So, the earthquake seized them, and they were (found dead) in their homes, fallen on their breasts. [78]

So, he turned away from them and said, "O my people, I have certainly delivered to you the message of my Lord, and wished you betterment, but you do not like the sincere advisers." [79]

Commentary

It has appeared in previous verses that the *Du'ā'* of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام had made a big rock open up in the nearby mountain through which an extra-ordinary she-camel had come out. Then, Allah Ta'ālā had made this she-camel the last trial for these people as she drank up all water from the well which was used by the people and animals of the locality for their needs. Therefore, Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام had fixed turns, a day for the she-camel and another for the people of the area.

The people of Thamūd were in trouble because of this she-camel. They wished she would somehow die. But, they did not dare do it themselves lest they are hit by some Divine punishment.

But, Satan has an unlimited array of weapons. One of his deadliest strategies of deception which makes human beings surrender whatever sense and sensibility they have is the trial through women. So, two beautiful damsels from the people of Thamūd threw a wager: Whoever kills this she-camel could take us, or anyone from among our girls to become his own.

Two youngmen from Thamūd, called Miṣḍa' and Qadhār, all drunk with the rosy prospect, went out to kill the she-camel. They hid themselves behind a big rock and waited for the she-camel to pass by them on its usual route. When the she-camel appeared before them, Miṣḍa'

hit her with an arrow and Qadhār hamstrung her by cutting her legs with his sword. Thus, they killed the she-camel.

The Holy Qur'an calls this person the most cruel and wretched from among the people of Thamūd: إِذَا نُبِيتَ أَشْقَبًا (when the one, most wicked of them, was sent [incited to kill her] - 91:12) because that was what brought mass punishment on the people of Thamūd.

Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام, after having found that the she-camel has been killed, told his people - as Divinely commanded - that they have only three days to live: تَتَّعُوا فِي دَارِكُمْ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ ذَلِكَ وَعْدٌ غَيْرُ مَكْذُوبٍ that is, 'enjoy yourselves in your homes for three days (only) [after that the punishment is coming]. That is a promise, not going to be false - 11:65.' But, when the undoing of a people becomes due, no advice or warning works. This is what happened with these wretched people. Even the very honest counsel of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام did not produce the desired effect. In turn, they started making fun of him by challenging him as to how and from where would this punishment come and what would be the signs of its coming.

Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام said: 'You want signs, so hear this. Tomorrow, on Thursday, your faces will turn dark yellow. Men, women, the young and the old, no one will remain exempted. Then, day after tomorrow, on Friday, all faces will turn dark red; and on Saturday, the third day to come, all faces will turn jet black. And this day will be the last day of your life.' Despite having heard what was said, these wretched people, rather than repent and seek forgiveness, decided that they better kill Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام himself. Their 'logic' was: If he is true and the punishment has to come upon them, why should they not finish him first before the punishment comes to finish them - and if he is a liar, then, let him have his punishment for lying. This intention of the people of Thamūd finds mention in details at other places in the Qur'an. Under this unanimous verdict of the Thamudites, some of them went to the house of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام with the intention of killing him. But, as Allah Ta'ālā would have it, they were killed by a hail of rocks while still on their way. Says the Qur'an: وَمَكْرُؤًا مَكَرًا وَ مَكْرُؤًا مَكَرًا وَ مَكْرُؤًا مَكَرًا that is, 'and they made a plan and We made a plan and they were not aware' - 27:50.

When came the morning of Thursday, then, as stated by Sayyidnā

Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام, the faces of all of them turned as yellow as if painted with a deep yellow colour. The first sign of the coming of punishment stood proved true. Yet, those tyrants were not to be mellowed enough to believe in Allah Ta'ālā and desist from their wrongdoings. In fact, their wrath on Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام increased all the more and everyone started running around to find and kill him. May Allah Ta'ālā protect everyone from His wrath, for that too has its signs which turn hearts and minds upside down, when people start taking their gain as their loss, and their loss as their gain, and their good as bad, and their bad as good.

At last came the second day and, true to the prophecy, everyone's face turned red; and then, came the third day when they turned jet black. Now there was nowhere to go. All disappointed, they stood waiting to see which way the punishment comes.

In this state of theirs, a severe earthquake struck from down below the earth, and from above tore in a horrendously shrill cry, an awesomely severe sound. This cry or sound caused everyone to die, instantly and simultaneously, fallen upside down, (like some dead bird landing on the ground on its breast - see 'Jāthimīn' in Mufradāt al-Qur'an). As for the coming of the earthquake, it does find mention in verse 78 which appears above, that is: فَآَخَذْتَهُمُ الرِّجْفَةُ (So, the earthquake seized them). The word: الرِّجْفَةُ (ar-rajfah) means earthquake.

Other verses of the Qur'an have also mentioned: فَآَخَذْتَهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ (that is, a Cry or Sound seized them - 15:83). The word: الصَّيْحَةُ (As-Ṣaiḥah) means a shrill cry or severe sound. From these two verses, we find out that two kinds of punishment had simultaneously converged on the people of Thamūd, the earthquake from below and the 'Ṣaiḥah' from above. The result was: فَآَصَبُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جُنُثِمِينَ (and they were [found dead] in their homes, fallen on their knees - 77). The word: جُنُثِمِينَ (jāthimīn) is a derivation from the verbal noun: *Juthūm*, which means to be rendered senseless and motionless at one spot, or remain sitting (Al-Qamūs). The sense is that everyone lay dead as and where one was. نَعُوذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنْ قَهْرِهِ وَعَذَابِهِ (We seek refuge with Allah from His Wrath and His Punishment).

Important parts of this story of the people of Thamūd have been mentioned in the different Sūrahs of the Qur'an itself. Some parts appear in Ḥadīth narrations. There are some others which commentators

have taken from Israelite narratives, but the proof of an event or its reality does not depend on them.

It appears in a Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī that, during a journey related to the Battle of Tabūk, the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Ṣaḥābah passed by Hījr, the place where the people of Thamūd had faced their punishment. At that spot, he gave instructions to the Ṣaḥābah that no one should go into the land area of that punishment-stricken habitation, nor should anyone use water from its wells. (Maḏharī)

According to some narrations, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: When the punishment overtook the people of Thamūd, no one survived except one person, Abū Righāl. He was in the Ḥaram of Makkah at that time. Allah Ta'ālā spared him of the punishment at that time because of the sanctity of the Ḥaram of Makkah. Finally, when he came out of the Ḥaram, the same punishment which had seized his people visited him as well, and right there he met his death. The Holy Prophet ﷺ also showed people the marks of the grave of Abū Righāl on the outskirts of Makkah; and he also said that a walking stick made of gold was also buried with him. When the Ṣaḥābah opened the grave, they found the gold stick there which was taken out. Mentioned in the same narration is that Banū Thaqīf, the inhabitants of Ṭā'if are the progeny of this very Abū Righāl. (Maḏharī)

Allah Ta'ālā, in His infinite wisdom, has allowed these habitations of punished peoples to stay as signposts of lesson for coming generations. The Holy Qur'an has repeatedly warned the people of Arabia that these places which come on their travel route to Syria should bring home to them their essential lesson in the rise and fall of peoples: لَمْ تَسْكُنْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا that is, (these are the dwellings of ungrateful people We destroyed and which) have not been lived in after them, except a little - 28:58).

After the mention of the event of punishment which overtook the people of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام, it was finally said: فَتَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يٰ قَوْمِ لَقَدْ أَتَيْتُكُمْ بِرِسَالَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّي وَنَصَحْتُ لَكُمْ وَلَكِنْ لَا تُحِبُّونَ النَّصِيحَ (So, he turned away from them and said, "O my people, I have certainly delivered to you the message of my Lord, and wished you betterment, but you people do not like the sincere advisers - 79), that is, after the visit of punishment on his peo-

ple, Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام and those who had believed in him left that place and went somewhere else. In some narrations, it appears that there were four thousand believers with Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام. He went along with them to Hadramaut in Yaman. It was there that Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام passed away from this mortal world. However, some narrations report his going to Makkah al-Mu'azzamah and where it was that he passed away.

From the outward arrangement of the text, it appears that Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام addressed his people while departing - O my people, I have certainly delivered to you the message of my Lord and have wished the best for you, but you do not seem to like honest advisers.

The question is when his people have been destroyed by the punishment, what is the use of addressing them now. The answer is that one good that may come out of it is that people in general would learn their lesson. This form of address resembles the address of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم when he had said a few words addressing dead disbelievers from the tribe of Quraysh in the Battle of Badr. And then, it is also possible that this saying of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام came to pass before the coming of the punishment and the destruction of his people - though, in the textual arrangement, it has been mentioned later.

Verses 80 - 84

وَلَوْ طَآءُ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُمْ بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ
مِّنَ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٨٠﴾ إِنَّكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِّنْ دُونِ
النِّسَاءِ ۖ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُونَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ
إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا أَخْرِجُوهُمْ مِّنْ قَرْيَتِكُمْ إِنَّهُمْ أَنَاسٌ يَّتَطَهَّرُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾
فَاجْبِنُوهُ وَآهْلَهُ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهُ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَأَمْطَرْنَا
عَلَيْهِمْ مَّطَرًا ۖ فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٨٤﴾

And (We sent) Lūṭ when he said to his people, "Do you commit the shameful act in which nobody has ever preceded you from all the worlds? [80] Surely, you come to

men lustfully instead of women. No, you are a people who cross the limits.” [81]

And the answer of his people was not but that they said, “Expel them from your town. They are a people who seek to be pure.” [82] So, We saved him and his family, except his wife. She was one of the rest. [83] And We rained down upon them a rain. So look, how was the fate of the sinners! [84]

Commentary

Out of the continuing series of stories relating to prophets عليهم السلام and their communities, the fourth story is that of Sayyidnā Lūṭ (Lot) عليه السلام.

Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام is a nephew of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullāh عليه السلام, the patriarch of prophets. The original homeland of both was known as Babel near Baṣrah in western Irāq. Idol-worship was common. Even the family of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was involved in it. Allah Ta'ālā sent Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام as a prophet for their guidance. His people opposed him which culminated in the well known Fire of Nimrūd. Even his father threatened to turn him out of his home.

Out of his entire family, only his wife, Sayyidah Sārah and nephew, Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام embraced Islam: فَأَمَّنْ لَهُ لُوطٌ (Then, Lūṭ believed in him - 29:26). Finally, it was with these two that he emigrated to Syria leaving his home country behind. After reaching Jordon river, he settled in Can'an near Bayt al-Maqdis under a Divine command.

Then, Allah Ta'ālā made Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام too a prophet and sent him to Sadūm (Sodom) near Bayt al-Maqdis for the guidance of people there. This area comprised of five major cities. They were called Sadūm, 'Amūrah, Admah, Sububim and Bālī' or Sawghar. The Qur'an has referred to their nucleus as 'Mu'tafikah' and 'Mu'tafikat' at several places. Sadūm was considered as the center and capital of these cities. It was here that Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام stayed. The land was fertile and verdant abounding in all kinds of grains and fruits. (These details appear in Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīt, Maḥzarī, Ibn Kathīr, Al-Manār etc.)

Man's habit, as Allah Ta'ālā says in the Qur'an, is: كَلَّا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنَّا شَاكِرٌ that is, when he acquires freedom from need, he starts trans-

gressing the limits - 96:6. On these people too, Allah Ta'ālā had opened the doors of His blessings. Goaded by this common behaviour pattern, all soaked in wealth and possessions, they reached the farthest ends of luxury and lust when they stood deprived of the most essential human sense of honour, dignity and modesty, and lost in that process, the very ability to distinguish between the good and the bad. In consequence, they got themselves involved in acts of unnatural indecencies. These are abominal acts, apart from being Ḥaram and sinful, acts which cause hatred and distaste in the heart and mind of everyone born with sound and decent taste, so much so, that even animals would not go near it.

Allah Ta'ālā appointed Sayyidnā Lūt عليه السلام for their guidance. He addressed his people and said: *أَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُمْ بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ* (Do you commit the shameful act in which nobody has ever preceded you from all the worlds?).

When refering to Zinā (adultery), the Qur'ān has said: *إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً* (Surely, it is a shameful act - 17:32). Here, the word: *فَاحِشَةً* (*fāḥishah*: shameful act) has been mentioned without 'Alif Lām while in the present verse, by saying: *الْفَاحِشَةُ* (*al-fāḥishah* : the shameful act), it has been made definite by the addition of 'Alif Lām. Thus, the hint given is that this unnatural evil act is, as if, the combination of all indecencies, and far grave a crime as compared to Zinā.

Then, it was said that this shameful act has never been committed by anyone in all the worlds before they did it. 'Amrū ibn Dīnār has said: The act was unknown in the world before these people. (Mazharī) Neither had the worst of human being had ever thought on those lines before the people of Sadūm. The Umayyad Khalīfah, 'Abd al-Mālīk said: Had this event relating to the people of Lūt عليه السلام not been mentioned in the Qur'ān, I would have never suspected that a human being could do something like that. (Ibn Kathīr)

Here, their immodesty has been censured on two grounds: (1) It so happens that men would get involved in many sins because of their social conditions, or because of a blind following of their ancestors - though, that too, is not a valid legal excuse in the Shari'ah of Islam. But, as a matter of customary practice, such a person could be taken as excusable in some or the other degree. But, when it comes to a sin

which has never been committed by anyone before, nor does it have any particular compulsions of its own, it becomes a curse of the highest degree. (2) The other ground is that this act becomes a channel of making others equally accursed. Think of a person who invents some evil act or custom. As obvious, the sin and punishment of his evil act falls on that person anyway, but, alongwith him, affected are all who sink in sin led by the act of the originator right through the Last Day, for the curse and punishment of all those so affected also sits on the shoulders of the originator of the evil.

In the second verse (81), this immodesty has been stated more explicitly - 'Surely, you come to men lustfully instead of women.' Here, the hint given is that, for the natural satisfaction of human desire, Allah Ta'ālā has appointed marrying women as a lawful method. Now, to bypass it and opt for an unnatural method is bland ugliness of the human self and certainly the proof of a dirty mind.

Therefore, the Ṣaḥābah, the Tābi'īn and Mujtahid Imāms have declared this crime and sin to be far more grave than other acts of shame. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah has said: The punishment given to the person who commits this act should match the punishment which came upon the people of Lūṭ عليه السلام by the command of Allah Ta'ālā - that rocks rained from the skies and the floor of the earth flipped upside down. Therefore, this person should be pushed down from a high mountain and rocks should be thrown from above on top of him. According to a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه in the Musnad of Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, and Ibn Mājah, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said about the people who commit this evil act: فاقْتُلُوا الْفَاعِلَ وَالْمَفْعُولَ that is, the doer of this evil deed and his passive partner (*al-maf'ūlu bihī*: with whom it was done) should both be killed. (Ibn Kathīr)

At the end of the verse (81), it was said: بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُونَ (No, you are a people who cross the limits). In other words, their real disease was that they would go beyond the limits set by Allah for everything - in their case, it would be the very limit of humanity they would be hopping over. The same thing happened about sexual desire when they crossed the limits appointed by Allah only to reach for a taste of the counter-natural.

In the third verse (82), the answer given by the people of Sayyidnā

Lūṭ عليه السلام in response to his word of advice has been put in a way that it shows that his people could not find a suitable rejoinder to what he had said. But, they were still adamant and started saying among themselves that these people seem to be self-righteous claiming a lot of purity for themselves. The treatment they deserved was that they should be thrown out of their town.

Mentioned in the fourth (83) and the fifth (84) verses is the Divine punishment given to the people of Sadūm for their crooked and immodest practice. As a consequence, the punishment of Allah Ta'ālā descended on the entire people with the exception of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام and some of his companions who remained safe from the punishment. The words of the Qur'an say: فَانجَيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ (We saved him and his 'ahl'). Who were these 'ahl'? Some commentators say that included in 'ahl' were two women who had become Muslims. The wife was not. Mentioned in another verse of the Qur'an is: فَمَا وَجَدْنَا فِيهَا غَيْرَ بَيْتٍ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ that is, in all those habitations, there was no Muslim home except one - 51:36. This obviously shows that only people from the household of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام were the ones who were saved from the punishment - and that did not include his wife. Some other commentators say that 'ahl' is general. It refers to his own family as well as others who had joined him by embracing Islam. To sum up, it can be said that they were a counted few Muslims to save whom Allah Ta'ālā ordered Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام to take, except his wife, with him and get out of that habitation late in the night and be sure not to look back, because when they are out of the habitation, the punishment would instantly descend on those in it.

Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام followed the Divine command. He went out of the limits of Sadūm with his family and companions late in the night. There are two reports about the wife: (1) She just did not go with them; (2) That she did start off with them and walked on for a while, but since she was eager to see the fate of the people she had left behind, quite contrary to the initial Divine command, she was seized by the punishment. This event has been mentioned in the Qur'an at several occasions in varying details. Here, in the fourth verse (83), it has been briefly said that Allah Ta'ālā saved Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام and his family and companions from the punishment, but his wife was left

with the rest in it. The additional details of how they were saved and how they were asked to leave the habitation late in night and were not to look back appear in other verses.

In the fifth verse (84), the punishment which came on these people has been described in a few words - that an unusual rain was sent upon them. The details of this punishment appear in Sūrah Hūd where it is said:

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا جَعَلْنَا عَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا حِجَارَةً مِّنْ سِجِّيلٍ
مَّنصُوبَةٍ. مَّسْجُومَةً عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ وَمَا هِيَ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ بِبَعِيدٍ

(So, when Our command came, We turned its highest into its lowest, and We rained on it stones of hard clay, one over another marked, with your Lord. And they are not far from the transgressors - 11:82-83).

This tells us that the rain of stones came from above and from down below, angel Jibra'il lifted up the whole crust of the earth and threw it back upside down. Then, the stones which rained down were one over the other, that is, the stone rained so ceaselessly that they kept collecting one on top the next. These stones were marked. Some commentators say that every such stone was marked with the name of the person who was destined to be destroyed with it. And in the verses of Sūrah Al-Hijr, also mentioned before the account of the punishment is: فَآخَذَتْهُمْ الصَّيْحَةُ مُشْرِقِينَ that is, a Sound seized them at sunrise - 15:73).

This indicates that first to come was some harsh Sound from the skies, then came other punishments. The outward arrangement of the words shows that it was after this Sound that the earth crust was turned upside down and then, stones were rained on them to put a stamp on their disgrace. And it is also possible that the rain of stones came first and the turning over of the earth crust came later. The reason is that, given the style of the Qur'an, it is not necessary that something mentioned earlier should have also occurred earlier.

Out of the horrendous punishments sent on the people of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام, the punishment of turning the floor of the earth upside down has a particular correspondence with their act of shame and immodesty because they were guilty of perversion.

Towards the end of the verses of Sūrah Hūd cited a little earlier, the Qur'an has warned the people of Arabia when it says: وَمَا مِنْ الظَّالِمِينَ that is, these upturned habitations were not far from the transgressors. They pass by them while traveling to Syria but it is surprising that they would learn no lesson from them.

And these sights are not restricted with the time the Holy Qur'an was being revealed. They are still there between Bayt al-Maqdis and Jordan river, particularly the area known as the Sea of Lūt or the Dead Sea. It lies way deep below the sea level. On a particular section, there is water which is unusual. No sea life survives there. Hence, the name: Dead Sea. This is said to be the legendary Sodom. May Allah keep us safe from His Punishment and Wrath.

Verses 85 - 87

وَالِى مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا قَالَ يَاقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ
إِلَهِ غَيْرُهُ قَدْ جَاءَتْكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَأَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ
وَالْمِيزَانَ وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي
الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ
﴿٨٥﴾ وَلَا تَقْعُدُوا بِكُلِّ صِرَاطٍ تُوعِدُونَ وَتَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ
اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِهِ وَتَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا وَاذْكُرُوا إِذْ كُنْتُمْ قَلِيلًا
فَكَثَرَكُمُ ۖ وَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾ وَإِنْ كَانَ
طَائِفَةٌ مِنْكُمْ آمَنُوا بِالَّذِى أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ وَطَائِفَةٌ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا
فَأَصْبِرُوا حَتَّى يَحْكُمَ اللَّهُ بَيْنَنَا وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحَاكِمِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾

And (We sent) to Madyan his brother, Shu'aib. He said, "O my people, worship Allah. You have no god other than Him. There has come to you a clear sign from your Lord. And fill the measure and weight in full, and do not make people short of their things, and do not make mischief on the earth after it has been set in order. That is good for you, if you are believers. [85] And do not sit in every path threatening, and prevent from the

way of Allah the people who believe in Him, and seeking a twist in it. And remember the time when you were few, then He increased you in number. And look, how was the fate of the mischief makers. [86] And if a group from among you has believed in what I have been sent with, and another group has not believed then, keep patience until Allah decides between us. And He is the best of all judges.” [87]

Commentary

The series of stories relating to prophets عليهم السلام continues. The fifth story appears in the verses quoted above. This is the story of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام and his people.

Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام, according to Muḥammad ibn Ishāq, is among the progeny of Madyan, the son of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, and he is also related to Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام. The lineal descendants of Madyan, the son of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام also came to be known by the name, Madyan - and the locality where they lived is also called Madyan. Thus, Madyan is the name of a people and the name of a city as well. This city still survives near the port of Ma'ān in Eastern Jordan. When relating the story of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام elsewhere, the Qur'an says: وَلَمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُ مَاءً مَدْيَنَ (And when he arrived at the watering [place] in Madyan - 28:23), it is referring to this very habitation. (Ibn Kathīr) Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام was known for his impressive oratory because of which he was called the Orator among Prophets. (Ibn Kathīr, Al-Bahr Al-Muḥīṭ)

The people to whom Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام was sent have been identified by the Holy Qur'an as the residents or people of Madyan, and also as the people of Aikah. The word: اَيْكَة (Aikah) means a forest.

Some commentators say that these were two different people and lived in separate settlements. Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام was sent to one of them first. When they were destroyed, he was sent to the other. The punishment which came upon these two has also been stated in different words. The punishment of the *Rajfah* on the people of Madyan is mentioned as *Ṣaiḥah* (Sound) at some places, while as *Rajfah* (earthquake) at others. The punishment of the people of Aikah has been stated as being that of *Zullah* (shade, canopy). The form in which this punishment came was that the people of Aikah were first subject-

ed to intense heat in their locality which almost roasted them. Then, in the forest closeby there came a dense cloud which cast its shade over the entire forest. Attracted by the shade and cool breeze there, all inhabitants of the locality assembled under the shade of that cloud. As Divine arrangement would have it, here were its criminals walking on their two feet and reaching the exact spot where they were to be destroyed, without a warrant of arrest and without a police gun pointed at them. Once they were all there, the clouds rained fire and the earthquake shook the earth. That killed them all.

Then, there are other commentators who say that the people of Madyan and the people of *Aikah* are the same people and the three kinds of punishment mentioned here converged on these people. First came the Fire from the clouds, then, with it, rose the piercing Sound, and then, the earthquake shook the earth. Ibn Kathīr has favoured this view.

However, whether these two people are separate or are two names of the same people, what matters is the message of truth delivered to them by Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام - and that has been mentioned in the first (85) and second (86) verses. Before we move on to the explanation of this message, let us first understand that the essence of Islam, which is the combined call of all blessed prophets, is the fulfillment of mutual rights. Then rights are of two kinds. First come rights which are related directly to Allah Ta'ālā. No visible human gain or loss seems to depend on their fulfillment or abandonment, for example, praying and fasting (Ṣalāh and Ṣawm). Secondly, there are the rights of the servants of Allah (Ḥuqūq al-'Ibād: human rights - in secular terminology) which are related to human beings. These people were heedless to and unaware of both these rights, in fact, were acting counter to both.

By not believing in Allah Ta'ālā and His messengers, they were violating the rights of Allah, and on top of it, by decreasing weights and measures, they were slicing through and wasting away the rights of human beings. Then, such people would go on to sit on entry points of roads and streets and would terrorize all comers, rob them of their belongings, and warned them of worse consequences if they believed in Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام. And thus, on God's good earth, they had

made disorder the order of the day. It was to correct these misdeeds that Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام was sent to them.

In the first and second verses quoted above, Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام said three things to correct the course of his people: (1) First he said: يَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ مَالِكُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ (O my people, worship Allah. You have no god other than Him). This is the same *Da'wah*, the call to *Tauhid*, the Oneness of Allah, which all blessed prophets have been giving all along the lanes of time, a call which is the spirit of all true beliefs and deeds. Since these people too were all sold to the worship of the created, and consequently, heedless to the sacred Being and Attributes of Allah Ta'ālā, and thus, neglectful of the fulfillment of His rights. Therefore, this was the first message given to them. (2) Then, it was said: قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ (There has come to you a clear sign from your Lord). Here, 'clear signs' or proofs refers to the miracles which were manifested at the hands of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام. The different forms in which these miracles had appeared find mention in Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ.

(3) The statement which follows lays down a major rule of just conduct. It was said: فَارْزُقُوا الْكَائِلَ وَالْمِيزَانَ وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ (And fill the measure and weight in full, and do not make people short of their things). The word: كَائِلٌ (*kail*) means measure, and: مِيزَانٌ (*mīzān*) is used in the sense of weighing, and: بَخَسٌ (*bakhs*) means to bring loss on someone by giving one less than what is due. Thus, the instruction given in the verse is to give full measure and weight and to abstain from causing loss to them by holding back what is their due.

In the first part of the verse, the particular crime of under-measuring or under-weighing in buying and selling was prohibited. Later, by saying: لَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ (and do not make people short of their things), the prohibition was generalized. Now the prohibition applies to all kinds of decreasing, slicing, under-cutting or short-changing of rights - whether related to property, or honour, or something else. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

From here we know that the way it is forbidden to give less than due while weighing and measuring, similarly, forbidden is any cutting back on the human rights of other people. Acts like attacking someone's honour, not giving due respect to someone according to his legiti-

mate station, showing shortcoming in obeying those the showing of obedience to whom is necessary and failing to respect those who must compulsorily and duly be respected are included under the purview of the crime which used to be committed by the people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام. During his famous *Khutbah* of the Last *Hajj*, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم declared that the honour of people is as worthy of being respected and defended as their blood is, stands as a broader confirmation of this view.

All these things are included under the words: مُطَفِّفِينَ (*muṭaffifīn*) and: تَطَفُّفٍ (*taṭfīf*) wherever mentioned in the Qur'ān. Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'zam رضى الله عنه saw a person making his Rukū' and Sajdah in a hurry. He said: قَدْ طَفَفْتَ (that is, you are guilty of measuring and weighing short -Mu'atṭa Imām Mālik). By saying so, he meant that the person had not fulfilled the right of Ṣalāh as it was due. Thus, in this report, the shortcoming of not fulfilling the right of Ṣalāh as due has been referred to by the word: تَطَفُّفٍ (*taṭfīf*: measuring and weighing short).

At the end of the verse, it was said: وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا (and do not make mischief on the earth after it has been set in order). This sentence has also appeared earlier in this Sūrah Al-A'raf (for details, please see comments under verse 56) where it was said that the physical betterment of conditions on the earth depends on utilizing things properly - as and where due, respecting limits and maintaining moderation, equity and justice; and spiritual betterment depends on relationship with Allah and obedience to His commands. As for the opposite of it, that is, physical and spiritual disorder on earth, it shows up when these principles are compromised or abandoned. The people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام had done exactly this. They had totally abandoned these principles because of which earth had become a hotbed of physical and spiritual disorder. That is why they were advised to abstain from such deeds which would serve as corrupting influence for the whole earth.

Then, it was said: ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (This is good for you, if you are believers). The sense is that should they repent and retract from their evil doings, it has nothing but good waiting for them in their present life as well as in the life to come. As for the prosperity and success in the life to come is concerned, it is obvious that it depends on

one's obedience to what Allah has commanded us to do. Then, as for success in the present world, we can say once people find out that there is someone who is honest in weights and measures and is particular about all other rights of his clients, his credit and goodwill will become established in the market and his business will increase in volume and reliability.

Determining the meaning of the statement - 'Do not sit in every path threatening and preventing people from the path of Allah' - in verse 86, some commentators have said that both sentences carry the same sense since these people stopped and threatened those who came to Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام. This they were ordered not to do.

Others have said that these crimes committed by them were two separate crimes. They sat on thoroughfares, looted and snatched things, and also prevented people from believing in Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام. Thus, the first sentence describes the first crime while the second sentence describes the other. The later view has been relied upon in Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ and elsewhere too. Also included under the purview of this command against looting and snatching are checkpoints set up on thoroughfares to realize impermissible taxes against the provisions of the Shari'ah.

'Allāmah Al-Qurṭubī has said that those who sit on thoroughfares and make people pay undue taxes against the provisions of the Shari'ah, they too are criminals like the people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام - rather, more oppressive and tyrannical than they were.

After that it was said: وَتَبَغُّنَهَا إِعْجَاجًا (and seeking a twist in it), that is, these people are always on the lookout for the opportunity to find something in the way of Allah which they could twist, turn and misrepresent and come up with their roster of doubts and objections through which they could try to wean people away from the true religion.

In the last sentence of verse 86, it was said: وَادْكُرُوا إِذْ كُنْتُمْ قَلِيلًا فَكَثَرَكُمْ وَأَنْظُرُوا (And remember the time when you were few, then He increased you in number. And look, how was the fate of mischief makers). The twin aspects of persuasion and intimidation were employed to warn these people. The first was persuasion when they were re-

mind of the blessing of Allah who increased their insignificant numbers to become a large nation, or changed their economic weakness into need-free financial strength. Then, to chasten them through intimidation, it was said that they could do much better if they had a look at the sad end of peoples who had engineered disorder on the earth. The peoples of Nūh, 'Ād, Thamūd and Lūṭ were examples of so many different punishments, which should help them understand their own situation and make the correction needed.

In the last verse (87), an answer has been given to scruples of these people about the division in their ranks after some of them believed in the call of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام while others kept rejecting him. But, there was no difference between them outwardly. Both groups were living comfortably. If being a disbeliever or denier would have been a crime, the criminal would have been punished. To answer that doubt, it was said: *فَاصْبِرُوا حَتَّى يَحْكُمَ اللَّهُ بَيْنَنَا* that is, do not make haste. Allah Ta'ālā is Forbearing and Merciful. He gives respite to wrongdoers. It is only when they become absolutely wicked and high-handed that the decree of Allah comes into action. The state in which they were was similar. If they remained sticking to their denial, the time was not far when the decisive punishment will overtake the deniers.

Verses 88 - 93

قَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ لَنُخْرِجَنَّكَ يَشْعِيبُ
وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَكَ مِنْ قَرْيَتِنَا أَوْ لَتَعُودَنَّ فِيْ مِلَّتِنَا قَالَ أَوَلَوْ
كُنَّا كَرِهَيْنَ ﴿٨٨﴾ قَدْ افْتَرَيْنَا عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا إِنْ عُدْنَا فِي
مِلَّتِكُمْ بَعْدَ إِذْ نَجَّيْنَا اللَّهُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَكُونُ لَنَا أَنْ نَعُودَ
فِيهَا إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ رَبُّنَا وَسِعَ رَبُّنَا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا
عَلَى اللَّهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا رَبُّنَا افْتَحْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ قَوْمِنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَأَنْتَ
خَيْرُ الْفَاتِحِينَ ﴿٨٩﴾ وَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ لَئِنْ
اتَّبَعْتُمْ شُعَيْبًا إِنَّكُمْ إِذًا لَخٰسِرُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾ فَآخَذَتْهُمْ الرِّجْفَةُ
فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جُثَمِينَ ﴿٩١﴾ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا شُعَيْبًا كَانُوا

لَمْ يَغْنَوْا فِيهَا ۚ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا شَعِيبًا كَانُوا هُمُ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٩٢﴾
 فَتَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يَاقَوْمِ لَقَدْ أَبْلَغْتُكُمْ رِسَالَاتِ رَبِّي وَنَصَحْتُ
 لَكُمْ فَكَيْفَ آسَىٰ عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ كَافِرِينَ ﴿٩٣﴾

The chiefs of his people, who were arrogant, said, "O Shu'aib, we will expel you and those who believe with you from our town, or you shall have to turn to our faith." He said, "Even if we hate it? [88] We will be forging a lie against Allah, if we turn to your faith after Allah has saved us from it. And it is not for us that we turn to it unless Allah, our Lord, so wills. Our Lord encompasses everything with His knowledge. In Allah we place our trust. Our Lord, decide between us and our people, with truth, and You are the best of all judges." [89]

And the chiefs of his people who disbelieved said, "If you are to follow Shu'aib, then you are sure losers." [90]

So, the earthquake seized them, and they were (found dead) in their homes fallen on their knees. [91] Those who belied Shu'aib are as if they never dwelt there. Those who belied Shu'aib, they were themselves the losers. [92]

So, he turned away from them and said, "O my people, I have surely delivered to you the message of my Lord, and wished your betterment. How, then, should I grieve over a disbelieving people?" [93]

Commentary

When the people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام told him: Had you been on the side of truth, believers in you would have been prospering and non-believers in you would have been under punishment. But, what is actually happening is that both parties have come out equal and living a comfortable life. With this incongruity in sight, how can we take you to be true? Thereupon, the answer that Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام gave was: Do not make haste. The time is near when Allah Ta'ālā will decide the case between the two of them. Not convinced by his answer, the arrogant chiefs of those people said what is always said by oppressive practitioners of arrogance. They said: O Shu'aib, ei-

ther you and the rest of your believers return to the fold of our faith, or else, we shall throw you out of our hometown.

As for the return of ' the rest of believers in Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام to the fold of their old faith' is concerned, it is something which can be understood, for all of them were a part of the faith and way of the disbelievers. It was only later that they had embraced Islam. But, the case of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام was different. He had never followed their false faith and way even for a day - nor can a prophet of Allah Ta'ālā ever follow a faith which is counter to pure monotheism. Why then would they be asking him to return to their faith? Perhaps, it was because Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام - before prophethood was bestowed on him - would maintain silence over their false sayings and doings and continued living among the people as one of them. Because of this, his disbelieving people took Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام too as one of the rest, a fellow-traveller and votary of their faith. It was only after he gave his call of true 'Imān that they discovered that his faith or religion was different from their own. Then, this led them to conclude that he had turned away from their old faith. About their warning that he must return to their old faith, Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام said: اَوَلَمْ نَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ قَبْلَ : It means: Are you trying to say that we should return to the fold of your faith despite that we do not like it and consider it to be false? This is a manner of saying that it can never be.

In the second verse (89), Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام said to his people: Allah Ta'ālā saved us from your false faith. Now if we were to return to your faith, this would amount to a false and grim accusation by us against Allah Ta'ālā.

First of all giving *Kufr* and *Shirk* the status of faith by itself means that they have been commanded by Allah Ta'ālā - which is forging a lie against Him. In addition to that, after having believed in the revealed Truth (Imān) and after having its knowledge and insight, a return to *Kufr* (disbelief) would amount to saying that the first way was false and erroneous while the true and correct way was that which has been adopted later. As obvious, this is a compounded lie and accusation - that the true (*Haqq*) was taken to be false (*Bāṭil*) and vice versa, the *Bāṭil* to be *Haqq*.

There was a certain flavour of claim or assertion in this saying of

Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام - that we can never return to your religion again. Making such a claim is, at least outwardly, contrary to the spirit of self-less submission a true servant of Allah is supposed to have ('*abdiyyah*). It does not behove those who are close to the presence of Allah and those who have come to know Him. Therefore, he said: مَا كَانَ لَنَا أَنْ نَعُودَ فِيهَا إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ رَبُّنَا، وَسِعَ رَبُّنَا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا، عَلَى اللَّهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا (And it is not for us that we turn to it unless Allah, our Lord, so wills. Our Lord encompasses everything with His knowledge. In Allah we place our trust).

This statement is a mirror of his humility (*Ijz*), an assertion of trust in Allah (*Tawakkul*) and a confident attitude of resigning matters to Him (*Tafwīd*). These are master virtues of prophets. They amount to saying: What are we and how can we claim to do something or stay away from it? To be able to do something good and to succeed in staying away from evil is nothing but the grace of Allah Ta'ālā - as said by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم:

لَوْلَا اللَّهُ مَا اهْتَدَيْنَا وَلَا تَصَدَّقْنَا وَلَا صَلَّيْنَا

Had there not been the grace of Allah Ta'ālā, we would have not been guided right, nor been able to give in charity, nor to make Ṣalāh.

It was due to this quality of trusting in Allah alone that when, after having talked to the arrogant chiefs of the people, Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام realized that nothing seems to move these people in any manner whatsoever, he stopped addressing them and made the following *Du'a'* (prayer) to Allah Ta'ālā: رَبَّنَا اقْضَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ قَوْمِنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْفَاتِحِينَ (Our Lord, decide between us and our people, with truth, and You are the best of all judges). Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه has said that the word: فَتَحَ (*fathḥ*) means 'decide' at this place. That is how the word: فَاتِحٍ (*fatih*) takes the sense of Qaḍī or judge.

And in reality, through these words, Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام had prayed for the destruction of the disbelievers from among his people - which was answered by Allah Ta'ālā when they were destroyed by an earthquake.

Reported in the third verse (90) is a misleading statement of the arrogant chiefs of the people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام which they made while talking among themselves, or said that to their followers:

that is, 'if you are to follow Shu'aib, then you are sure losers.' (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ from 'Atā')

The account of the punishment of these wicked people was given in the fourth verse (91) in the following words: فَآَخَذْتَهُمُ الرِّجْفَةَ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جِثِيمِينَ (So, the earthquake seized them, and they were [found dead] in their homes fallen on their knees).

The punishment of the people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام has been identified as earthquake (*Rajfah, Zalzalah*) while in other verses it appears as: فَآَخَذَهُمُ عَذَابُ يَوْمِ الظُّلَّةِ (26:189) which means that they were seized by the punishment of *Yowm az-Zullah*. *Yowm az-Zullah* means day of the shade. It refers to what happened to them when to come on them first was the shade of a deep and thick cloud under which they all assembled. Then, from this very cloud, stones or fire was rained down.

To accodomate and reconcile the sense of the two verses given above, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه has said: First of all, the people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام were subjected to such intense heat, as if the door of Hell has been thrown open towards them. This made them suffocate. Shade or water, nothing seemed to work. Driven by heat, they went into basements. They were more hot. With no choice left, they ran from the city into the nearby forest. There, Allah Ta'ālā sent a thick cloud with cool breeze passing underneath. Out of their senses under the impact of heat, they all rushed for refuge under the shade of that cloud. At that time, the whole cloud became a cloud of fire raining on them and also came the earthquake which turned them to ashes. In this manner, the punishments of the earthquake and the shade had simultaneously converged on these people. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

Some commentators have said that it is also possible that the people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام were split in different groups or sections where some were hit by the earthquake while others were destroyed by the punishment of the shade.

In verse 92, the fate of the people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام has been cited as a lesson - which is the real purpose behind the description of this event. It was said: الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا شُعَيْبًا كَأَن لَّمْ يَغْنَوْا فِيهَا (Those who belied Shu'aib are as if they never dwelt there). One of the meanings of the

word: غِيًى (*ghinā*) is to live at some place in peace and comfort. At this place, this is the meaning intended. The sense of the sentence is that the homes where they lived in peace and comfort, turned so deserted after this punishment as if peace and comfort had never existed there. Then, it was said: الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا شُعَيْبًا كَانُوا هَٰلِكِينَ (Those who belied Shu'aib were themselves the losers). The hint given is that these were the people threatening to throw Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام and his believing companions out from their city, but, in the end, the loss hit none but them.

In the sixth (93) verse, it was said: فَتَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ (So, he turned away from them). It means that, with punishment for his people in sight, Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام and his believing companions moved away from there. The majority of commentators says that these blessed souls left this place for Makkah al-Mu'azzamah where they stayed till the end.

It was his total disappointment with his people neck-deep in disobedience and contumacy which prompted him to pray that they be chastened. But, when the actual punishment came as a result of it, his heart pinched because of his prophetic concern and affection for them. Then, it was for the peace of his own heart that he said addressing his people: 'O my people, I have surely delivered to you the messages of my Lord, and wished you betterment. How, then, should I grieve over a disbelieving people?'

Sūrah Al-A'raf

[The Heights]

Sūrah Al-A'raf was revealed in Makkah and it has 206 Verses and 20 Sections

Verses 94 - 95

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Very Merciful

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّنْ نَّبِيٍّ إِلَّا أَخَذْنَا أَهْلَهَا بِأَلْبَابٍ سَاءَ وَ
الضَّرَاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَضَّرَّعُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾ ثُمَّ بَدَّلْنَا مَكَانَ السَّيِّئَةِ
الْحَسَنَةَ حَتَّى عَفَوْا وَقَالُوا قَدْ مَسَّ آبَاءَنَا الضَّرَّاءُ وَالسَّرَّاءُ
فَأَخَذْنَاهُمْ بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾

And We did not send any prophet in a town, but We seized it's people with hardship and suffering so that they may turn humble. [94] Thereafter, We substituted good in place of evil until they increased, and said, "The suffering and prosperity came to our fathers (too)." Then We seized them suddenly while they were not aware. [95]

The above verses continue to speak of the events of early people and their ominous fate. The events of five early prophets and their people have been so far discussed. The sixth event concerning the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and his people is going to be discussed after a few next verses.

We have already noted that usual style of the Holy Qur'an with regard to the historical events is quite different from the books of history. The Holy Qur'an does not care to describe a historical event in it's entirety or in chronological order. Rather, it selects certain relevant portion of the event then lays emphasis on the lesson or moral contained therein.

After relating the stories of the early people, the above verses speak of the warnings and lessons for present people in order to save them from the ill-fate met by their forefathers. The verse 94 warns people that the fate of disaster and suffering described in the foregoing verses was not limited to the people of Nūḥ, 'Ād and Thamūd only. It is, rather, a usual practice of Allah that He sends His prophets to people for their guidance and eternal success. Then, those who do not listen to their advice and reject their invitation are subjected to suffering and distress so that they may turn to their Lord in repentance. It is human to turn to The Creator in distress. This suffering is, in fact, a blessing of Allah in disguise as it is meant for their good. The great spiritual leader Maulānā Rūmī has versified this fact in these words:

خلق را باتو چنین بد خوکنند تاترا ناچار روا آنسو کنند

"The people are made to misbehave with you
in order that you turn to your Lord in tears."

The verse 94 has referred to this fact by saying, 'We seized it's people with hardship so that they may turn in humbleness. The Arabic word: بَأْسًا 'Ba'sa' signifies hunger or poverty while the word: ضَرًّا 'Darra' signifies illness. The Holy Qur'an has used these words to signify the same meanings in other situations. The respected Companion 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه has confirmed these meanings of the two words. Some linguists have said that the word: بَأْسًا 'Ba'sa' refers to financial distress while the word: ضَرًّا 'Darra' signifies loss of health. The verse 95 said: "Thereafter, We substituted good in place of evil until they increased."

The Arabic word: سَيِّئَةً 'sayyiah' in this verse refers to distress, while the word: حَسَنَةً 'hasanah' signifies prosperity, and the word أَفْوَ: 'afw' signifies increase or growth. The verse implies firstly that, they were made to undergo a test of hardship and suffering in order that they may repent and turn to Allah. When they did not take lesson from this warning and were a failure in this test, they were put to another test of a different kind. Their adversity was replaced with prosperity and their distress with ease and comfort until they increased in number and strength. This prosperity, after a long period of adversity, should have made them grateful to their Lord and they should have repented to Allah, but being completely lost in material pursuits and

perverted by their mundane desires, they did nothing but to say, 'The suffering and prosperity came to our fathers (too).' that is, their suffering and prosperity had nothing to do with their deeds, it was just a natural course of changing phenomena. It was after their obstinate persistence in their evil and ignorance that they were seized by the punishment of Allah. The verse said, 'Then We seized them suddenly while they were unaware.'

Verse 96 - 99

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَىٰ أٰمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَاتٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ
وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَٰكِنْ كَذَّبُوا فَآخَذْنَاهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾ أَفَأَمِنَ
أَهْلُ الْقُرَىٰ أَن يَأْتِيَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا بَيَاتًا وَهُمْ نَائِمُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾ أَوَآمِنَ أَهْلُ
الْقُرَىٰ أَن يَأْتِيَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا ضَحًى وَهُمْ يُلْعَبُونَ ﴿٩٨﴾ أَفَأَمِنُوا مَكْرَ اللَّهِ ۚ
فَلَا يَأْمَنُ مَكْرَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾

And if the people of the towns believed and feared Allah, We would have opened for them blessings from the heavens and the earth, but they disbelieved. So, We seized them for what they used to earn for themselves. [96] So, do the people of the towns feel secure from Our punishment coming upon them at night while they are asleep? [97] And do the people of the towns feel secure from Our punishment coming upon them in broad daylight while they are at play? [98] So, do they feel secure from the plan of Allah? So, no one feels secure from the plan of Allah but the people who are losers. [99]

The Arabic word بَرَكَه: '*barakah*' used in this verse and translated as blessing signifies increase or growth. The expression 'blessing of the heaven and the earth' refers to all means of prosperity, like proper and timely rain from heavens (clouds), abundant and healthy produce of the earth and, above all, carefree enjoyment from their possessions with no anxiety to spoil the pleasure of things. That is, everything would have been blessed with '*barakah*'.

The *barakah* manifests itself in two different ways. Sometimes, the thing itself increases in quantity, as is reported happening with the Holy Prophet ﷺ that a large number of people drank from a small pot of water and were satiated, or the whole army was fed to their satis-

faction from a small quantity of food. Sometimes, the quantity of thing does not increase but its usefulness or efficacy is increased manifold. It is usually observed that a certain thing in our household lasts as long or benefits as many people as would have done three or four things of the same kind. That is to say, certain things yield lasting benefit to people while certain other things do not, or hardly serve people either due to being damaged by accident or not being accessible in times of need.

For example, sometime a single morsel of food becomes a source of great strength and health, while in some other times a large amount of food produces no results. Sometimes, we are able to do a considerable amount of work in one hour's short time, while on other occasions this amount of work can hardly be done in four or five hour's time. In these instances the thing itself did not increase. That is, the morsel of food and period of time remained as they were, their effect and benefit was, however, enhanced many times.

This verse has implicitly expressed that 'Barakah' in all the heavenly and earthly things can be achieved through the faith in Allah and by acquiring: *taqwā* (abstinence) while, in the absence of these two, one is deprived of the: *barakah*. When we take in view the circumstances prevailing in today's world we notice the fact that the net produce of the earth is comparably far more than ever before. The recent inventions are at our service to ease our life in a way that could not be imagined of by past generations. But in spite of this abundance of means and resources today's man is proportionally worried, depressed, dissatisfied and as much deprived of peace and comfort as was never before.

What has deprived today's man of peace and comfort? No explanation can be given to this question except that the: *barakah* is missing from these things. Another point which demands our attention here is that prosperity, good health and worldly possessions are not necessarily a sign of favour and blessing from Allah. Sometimes, these things are given to man out of anger as has been made clear in verse 44 of Surah Al-An'am which has said:

فَلَمَّا نَسُوا مَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ أَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ

Then they forgot the advice they had recieved, we opened to them the doors of all good things. (6:44)

Thereafter, they were suddenly caught by the punishment of Allah. This makes us understand that prosperity and affluence of wealth are not sure signs of Allah's favour. They can sometimes, be a sign of Allah's wrath and punishment. On the contrary, the present verse leads us to conclude that: *barakah* in earthly and heavenly things is a sign of Allah's favour. In order to differentiate between the two situations one must understand that prosperity and good health are sometimes, given to people against their sins and transgression. They are usually short-lived and are a sign of Allah's displeasure while on other occasions people are favoured with them with lasting benefits as a reward of 'Imān' and 'taqwā'. To determine as to which is a sign of favour and which a sign of displeasure is difficult as both are alike.

The men of Allah, however, have suggested some distinct signs to differentiate between the two. When prosperity and good health make man more grateful to Allah and he tends to worship His Lord more than before, it is an indication of Allah's favour. On the contrary, when one tends to be more involved in sinful deeds, it must be a sign of Allah's wrath. We seek shelter against such state of affairs.

The verses 97 to 99 have warned the people of the world saying: "So, do the people of the towns feel secure from Our punishment coming upon them at night while they are asleep?" The verse implies that the residents of these towns (the people living in the time of the holy Prophet ﷺ) seem to be unmindful of the fact that they can be caught by the punishment of Allah any time when sleeping at night. They should not feel themselves secure from the punishment of Allah which may come to them suddenly any day when they are busy in their worldly pursuits. What has made them so fearless of Allah's plan? The fate of the early people referred to in the foregoing verses should be a lesson for these people. Man should be wise enough to take lesson from the events of other people and avoid things to do which had led them to death and disaster.

Verses 100 - 102

أَوَلَمْ يَهْدِ لِلَّذِينَ يَرِثُونَ الْأَرْضَ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا أَنْ لَوْ نَشَاءُ

أَصَبْنَاهُمْ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَنَطْبَعُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾
 تِلْكَ الْقُرَى نَقِصُ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِهَا وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ
 بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَمَا كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا بِمَا كَذَّبُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ كَذَلِكَ يَطْبَعُ
 اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٠١﴾ وَمَا وَجَدْنَا لِأَكْثَرِهِمْ مِنْ
 عَهْدٍ وَإِنْ وَجَدْنَا أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَفَاسِقِينَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

Is it not a guidance to those who inherit the land after it's (former) inhabitants that, if We so will, We would afflict them for their sins? And We seal their hearts so that they do not listen. [100]

Those are the towns We narrate to you of their important events. And surely their messengers came to them with clear signs, but they were not to believe in what they had belied earlier. This is how Allah seals the hearts of the disbelievers. [101]

And We did not find with most of them any covenant (unbroken), and surely We have found most of them sinners. [102]

After relating events of the early people, the above verses invite the people of Arabia and the people of the world to take lesson from these events by abstaining from deeds that incurred Allah's wrath, and by following the practices that led the prophets and their believers to eternal success. The verse 100 speaks " Is it not a guidance to those who inherit the land after it's (former) inhabitants that, if We so will, We would afflict them for their sins?" The word هُدًى يَهْدِي signifies to guide or to inform. The events narrated above have been made the subject of the verb يَهْدِي (guide) . The verse implies that these events should serve as a lesson and a means of guidance for later generations who have inherited the land from their earlier owners. They too, can incur the punishment of Allah for their disbelief just as their ancestors met the fate of ruin and disaster for their disobedience.

Thereafter, the verse says:

وَنَطْبَعُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ

"And We seal their hearts so that they do not listen"

The word: طبع is used for printing or stamping. It implies that these people have taken no lesson from the past events with the result that they incurred the wrath of Allah making their hearts sealed. They are, therefore, unable to listen to the truth. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said in a Tradition: "When one commits sin for the first time a black dot is placed on his heart, if he keeps committing sins for the second and third times the second and third dots are placed. If one increases in his sins without repenting to Allah, these black spots keep increasing until the whole heart is painted black." This ultimately deprives man of his natural faculty of distinguishing right from wrong. This, consequently, leads one to receive evil as good and good as evil, harmful as useful and useful as harmful.

This perversion of human understanding has been termed in the Holy Qur'ān as '*ra'n*' signifying the rust of the heart. In this verse, as in many other verses of the Holy Qur'ān, this stage has been named as '*taba*'. The result of their hearts being sealed has been mentioned at the end of the verse by saying (فَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ) "so that they do not listen". One may think that more appropriate expression in this context was (فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ) "they do not understand" as the adverse effect of sealing of the heart is obviously related to the faculty of understanding and not to the listening. The Holy Qur'ān has used the word 'listen' to indicate that understanding is usually the result of listening to the truth. Now, since their hearts have been sealed they are rendered unable to listening the truth. Another explanation to this may be that all human faculties and limbs are controlled by human heart, that is, the function of all human parts is adversely affected by malfunctioning of the heart. When one loves any one or anything he likes everything - good or bad - in that person or object.

The verse 101 has contained the phrase تِلْكَ الْأَنْبَاءُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِهَا "these are stories of the towns that We narrate to you." The word: نَبَأٌ '*nabā*' in Arabic is used to denote some great news. With the word: مِنْ '*min*' the verse has indicated that the events described in these verses are only some of a large number of events bearing the same lesson. The verse has further said, "And surely, their messengers came to them with clear signs, but they were not to believe in what they had belied earlier." It brings out their obstinate attitude towards the prophets

who came to them with clear signs or miracles which are a definite means to decide between right and wrong but they obstinately rejected the truth, only because they had once belied them.

We know from this verse that miracles were given to all the prophets. The miracles of some prophets have been mentioned while the miracles of most of the prophets have not been referred to in the Holy Qur'ān. This does not allow one to infer that the prophets not mentioned in the Qur'ān were not given any miracles. As for the statement of the people of the prophet Hūd, appearing in Sūrah Hūd as مَا جِئْتُمْ بِبَيِّنَةٍ "you did not bring any clear sign", this verse has clearly indicated that their statement was simply out of their obstinacy or, may be they thought his miracles were of less significance.

Another point to be noted is that the present verse is speaking of the peculiarity of the disbelieving people who rigidly and obstinately followed the path of ignorance, only to prove that what they had once said was true, with no regard to all the clear signs and proofs of the truth. Most of the Muslims, even some 'Ulamā' (the religious scholars) are seen to have the same habit of supporting their wrong statements in the face of clear proofs of the truth. This condition is a usual cause of incurring Allah's wrath. ('Masail al Suluk')

Thereafter, the verse said كَذَلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِ الْكَافِرِينَ "This is how Allah stamps upon the hearts of the disbelievers" that is, Allah seals the hearts of those who disbelieve and reject the truth, making them unable to accept good as good. The verse 102 has said, "And We did not find with most of them any covenant (unbroken)." The Companion 'Abdullāh ibn Abbās رضى الله عنه has said that the covenant referred to in this verse is the Covenant called عَهْدُكَسْتُ . That is, the covenant that Allah made with the spirits of all the creatures before creating them, when Allah said to them: اَكُنْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ "Am I not your Lord?" All the human spirits entered into a covenant by answering " Yes" to the question. Most of the people forgot this covenant after they came to earth, and got involved in worshipping false gods instead of worshipping Allah. The verse, therefore, has said that Allah did not find most of the people true to this covenant. (Tafsīr Kabīr)

The respected companion 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه has said that the covenant referred to in this verse is the covenant of 'Īmān' the

Faith as has been indicated in the Holy Qur'an in these words **إِلَّا مَنِ اتَّخَذَ** "Except the one who entered into a covenant with Raḥmān (Allah), the covenant in this verse signifies the covenant of Faith. The verse, therefore, implies that most of the people deviated from their covenant with Allah. We usually note that nearly every individual when he finds himself trapped in some distress, no matter how sinful he is, turns to Allah and often makes a promise in words or in his heart that he will be faithful to Allah and obey Him and avoid disobedience if he is relieved from this calamity. But when they are out of the mess, they indulge in their mundane desires having no regard for their covenant with Allah.

The Holy Qur'an has made mention of many of such people. It may be noted that the verse has made exception by saying 'most of them' and not 'all of them'. It is because there are people who are so perverted that even in their distress they do not turn to Allah, and they do not think of making any promise with Allah, while there are others who fulfil their promise and stay obedient to Him. At the end, the verse has the phrase "We found most of them sinners." That is, most of the people deviate from their covenant of staying obedient to Allah.

The above verses have described five events of earlier people so that present people may learn lesson from them and avoid following the course of their forefathers that led them to disaster.

Of all the events of early people described in this chapter the next event is of prophet **Mūsā عليه السلام** which has been described in some detail in the following verses because his miracles are larger in number and more prominent in their nature. Similarly, his people, the Israelite, were more obstinate and ignorant than other people of the world. In addition, these verses, 103-110 carry some injunctions and points of discussion.

Verses 103 - 108

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ مُوسَىٰ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ
فَظَلَمُوا بِهَا فَأَنْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿١٠٣﴾ وَقَالَ

مُوسَىٰ يُفَرِّعُونَ إِنِّي رَسُولٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ ۖ حَقِيقٌ عَلَىٰ أَن لَا أَقُولَ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ ۚ قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِبَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ فَأَرْسِلْ مَعِيَ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ ۖ قَالَ إِن كُنْتَ جِئْتَ بِآيَةٍ فَأْتِ بِهَا إِن كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ ۖ فَأَلْقَىٰ عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٠٧﴾ ۖ وَنَزَعَ يَدَهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ بَيْضَاءُ لِلنَّاظِرِينَ ﴿١٠٨﴾

Then after them We sent Mūsā عليه السلام with Our signs to Pharaoh and his chiefs then , they did injustice to them. So, look, how was the fate of the mischief-makers. [103] And Mūsā عليه السلام said , "O Pharaoh, I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds, [104] worthy of saying nothing about Allah except the truth. I have come to you with a clear sign from your Lord. So, let the children of Isra'īl go with me." [105] He said, "If you have come with a sign, bring it out, if you are one of the truthful." [106] So he threw down his staff, and it was a serpent, manifest; [107] and drew out his hand, and it was a white light to the onlookers. [108]

The verse 103, has said that after the prophets Nūḥ, Hud, Ṣāliḥ, Luṭ and Shu'aib, We sent Mūsā عليه السلام with Our signs towards Pharaoh and his people. The 'signs' may refer to the verses of the Torah or to the miracles of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام . The word Pharaoh was the title of Egyptian kings. The Pharaoh of Mūsā's time is said to be Merneptah. The phrase كَفَرُوا بِهِمَا "they did injustice to them (signs)" here means that they showed indifference to the verses of Allah, instead of being grateful to Him and having faith in them they rejected His verses. The word ظلم rendered as wrong or injustice, in fact, signifies the use of something for a purpose opposite to what it was created for. Further it said فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ "So look how was the fate of mischief-makers." Again the people are invited to take lesson from these events and think of their own fate.

The verse is a clear declaration of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام before Pharaoh that he was a messenger of Allah, the Lord of all the worlds, and that his status of prophethood does not allow him to ascribe

anything but truth to Allah because the message given to the prophets by Allah is a sacred trust and it is a great sin to tamper with it. All the prophets of Allah are free of all sins and cannot do so. The prophet Mūsā عليه السلام tried to convince them that they should believe him because his truthfulness was beyond question and that he had never uttered a word of lie. In addition to this, his miracles are a clear proof to support his claim to prophethood.

In the light of these clear signs he must believe him and let the children of Isrā'īl go with him free of his illegitimate surveillance. The Pharaoh, out of his obstinacy, did not listen to anything, but demanded saying, " If you have come with a sign, bring it out, if you are among the truthful, " *إِنْ كُنْتَ جِئْتَ بِآيَةٍ فَأْتِ بِهَا إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِیْنَ* . The prophet Mūsā عليه السلام, in response to his demand, threw down his staff on the earth, instantly it turned into a serpent: *فَإِذَا هِيَ تُعْبَأُ مُبِیْنٌ* . The word 'thu'ban' in Arabic signifies a huge serpent. The use of the word 'mubīn' as an adjective which means 'clear or prominent' is quite descriptive of the fact that this miraculous event took place manifestly before the eyes of the people of the Pharaoh, and it was not performed secretly in a hidden or secluded place as is usually done by magicians. In some historical traditions it has been cited on the authority of the Companion Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه that as the serpent moved towards Pharaoh, he jumped from his throne and sought shelter near the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and many of his courtiers died of extreme fear. (Tafsīr Kabīr)

Transformation of the staff into a real serpent is not, in fact, totally impossible as it apparently seems. It is, however, surprising due to being unusual. The miracle has to be an unusual act, beyond the power of a common individual. Allah shows the miracles through His prophets to make people understand that they possess some divine powers and are true prophets of Allah. Thereafter, the verse (7:108) said, *وَنَزَعَ يَدَهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ بَيْضٌ لِلنَّظَرِیْنَ* . And he drew out his hand, and it was white light to the onlookers.'

The Arabic word: *naza'a* signifies extracting something from another thing with force. Here this word indicates that the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام applied some force while drawing out his hand. The verse does not speak of a place from where he drew out his hand. In

other verses, however, we find mention of two things. In a verse (27:12) we find the words اَدْخُلْ يَدَكَ مِنْ جَيْبِكَ 'enter your hand under your robe.' The other verse (20:22) contains the words (وَاضَعُ يَدَكَ إِلَى جَنَاحِكَ) 'put your hand under your arm.' The two phrases indicate that he used to draw out his hand either from under his arm or from under his shirt. Arabic word: بَيْضًا 'bayḍā' means white. The whiteness of hand may also be due to some disease, it is perhaps, why the Holy Qur'an has added the words 'without an evil' in other (28:32, 27:12) verse to eliminate any possible doubt of a disease. We know from a Tradition reported by the Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه that this whiteness was not of ordinary kind. It had light that illuminated the whole surrounding. (Qurtubī) The Arabic word 'nāẓirīn' signifying the 'onlookers or viewers' indicates that this light was so surprising for the people that they gathered to see it.

The prophet Mūsā عليه السلام performed two miracles at this occasion on the demand of the Pharaoh. First, the transformation of his staff into a serpent, second, drawing his hand out from under his arm, emanating light from it. The first was to serve as warning for the unbelievers while the second aimed at inviting them to the truth. It also indicated that the message of the prophet Mūsā was a light and to follow it would lead people to eternal success.

Verses 109 - 110

قَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْ قَوْمِ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّ هَذَا لَسَاحِرٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠٩﴾ يُرِيدُ أَنْ
يُخْرِجَكُم مِّنْ أَرْضِكُمْ فَمَاذَا تَأْمُرُونَ ﴿١١٠﴾

The chiefs of the people of the Pharaoh said, "This man is certainly a sorcerer of great knowledge. [109] He wants to expel you from your land. So, what do you suggest ?" [110]

The Arabic word 'Mala' is used for influential chiefs. After seeing these miracles they said to the people he was a great sorcerer. Being ignorant of divine powers of Allah they could say nothing else as they believed Pharaoh to be their god and had seen nothing but the magical charms of the sorcerers in their life. They, however, added the word 'alīm' signifying the one who knows, showing their impression that the

miraculous acts of Mūsā عليه السلام were of the kind that could not be performed by an ordinary magician. So, they said that he was a sorcerer of great knowledge.

The difference between miracle and sorcery

The miracles and sorcery are so distinct in their nature and effect that they do not require any explanation to any one applying common sense. The sorcerers usually live in impurity and, the more they are unclean and impure the more they are successful in their sorcery. The prophets, on the other hand, are by nature the most clean and pure people. Another obvious distinction is that a sorcerer is never successful when he makes claim to prophethood. Besides, the acts performed under the effect of sorcery do have physical causes as other things have, with the only difference that their causes remain hidden to common people. The people, therefore, take them to be happening without the help of any cause. On the contrary, the miracles are directly a manifestation of Allah's power and have nothing to do with physical causes. This is why the miracles have been ascribed directly to Allah and not to the prophets in the Holy Qur'an. The Qur'an said "but Allah threw the pebbles" (while these pebbles were thrown by the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the battle of Badr). In short, the miracles and sorcery are totally different from each other. The people of knowledge have no confusion about it. In order to eliminate any possible confusion of a common individual, Allah has provided with obvious distinctions between the two.

Even the people of the Pharaoh found the miracles of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام somehow different from the normal acts of sorcerers. Therefore, even while accusing him of sorcery they admitted that he was 'of great knowledge' meaning that his act was not comparable with the acts of the normal sorcerers.

Verses 111- 122

قَالُوا أَرْجِهْ وَأَخَاهُ وَأَرْسِلْ فِي الْمَدَائِنِ حَاشِرِينَ ﴿١١١﴾
يَأْتُونَكَ بِكُلِّ سَجَرٍ عَلَيْهِمْ ﴿١١٢﴾ وَجَاءَ السَّحَرَةُ فِرْعَوْنَ قَالُوا
إِنَّ لَنَا لَأَجْرًا إِن كُنَّا نَحْنُ الْغَالِبِينَ ﴿١١٣﴾ قَالَ نَعَمْ وَإِنَّكُمْ لِنَ

الْمُقْرِينَ ﴿١١٤﴾ قَالُوا يُمُوسَىٰ إِمَّا أَنْ تُلْقَىٰ وَإِمَّا أَنْ نَكُونَ
 نَحْنُ الْمُلْقِينَ ﴿١١٥﴾ قَالَ أَلْقُوا فَلَمَّا أَلْقَوْا سَحَرُوا أَعْيُنَ
 النَّاسِ وَاسْتَزْهَبُوهُمْ وَجَاءُوا بِسِحْرِ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١١٦﴾ وَأَوْحَيْنَا
 إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَلْقِ عَصَاكَ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَلْقَفُ مَا يَأْفِكُونَ
 ﴿١١٧﴾ فَوَقَعَ الْحَقُّ وَبَطَلَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١١٨﴾ فَغُلِبُوا
 هُنَالِكَ وَانْقَلَبُوا صَغِيرِينَ ﴿١١٩﴾ وَأَلْقَى السَّحَرَةُ سُجُودًا
 ﴿١٢٠﴾ قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٢١﴾ رَبِّ مُوسَىٰ وَهَارُونَ

﴿١٢٢﴾

They said, "leave him and his brother alone for a while, and send men to the cities to collect [111] and bring to you every expert sorcerer." [112]

And the sorcerers came to Pharaoh. They said, "There must be a reward for us, if we are the victors." [113] He said, "yes, and of course, you will be among the closer ones." [114] They said, "O Mūsā عليه السلام, either you throw (first) or shall we be the ones to throw?" He said, "You throw." [115]

So when they threw, they bewitched the eyes of the people, and made them frightened, and produced great sorcery. [116] And We revealed to Mūsā, "Throw your staff." Then of a sudden, it began to swallow all that they had concocted. [117]

So, the truth prevailed, and what they were doing became a nullity. [118] So, they were overcome there and turned humiliated. [119] And the sorcerers were constrained to fall in prostration. [120] They said, "We believe in the Lord of the worlds, [121] the Lord of Mūsā and Hārūn." [122]

These verses narrate the remaining part of the story of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام. Seeing these wonders of staves turning into serpents and making his hand emitting strong white light, the Pharaoh should have been convinced and have believed in Mūsā عليه السلام as the logic

and sense demanded. But it is the common practice of the wrong-doers that they always seek false interpretations of the truth in order to conceal it, the Pharaoh and his people belied him instead, and said to the people that he was a great sorcerer and that he wanted to expel them from their homes and take over the rule of the country. The people of the Pharaoh suggested:

أَرْجُهُ وَأَخَاهُ وَأَرْسِلْ فِي الْمَدَائِنِ حَاشِرِينَ - يَا تُوتَ بْنَ كَلَّ سَجِرْ عَلَيْهِم (١١٢-١١١)

"leave him and his brother alone for a while, and send men to the cities to collect and bring to you every expert sorcerer-111,112."

The people of the Pharaoh said that there were many expert sorcerers in their cities who were capable of defeating Mūsā عليه السلام.

Some soldiers should be sent to collect and bring the sorcerers for this purpose. Sorcery and magic, being the custom of the day, the sorcerers enjoyed a high status among people. Allah sent Mūsā عليه السلام with the miracles of the staff and white-lit hand so that people may clearly observe the misery of the sorcerers after entering into a contest with Mūsā عليه السلام. It is the usual practice of Allah that He sends His prophets with miracles that are appropriate to the demand of the time. For instance, in the time of the prophet 'Isā (the Jesus), Greek philosophy and medical sciences were at their zenith. He was, therefore, sent with the miraculous powers of restoring the sight of those who were born blind and cure the lepers instantly with a touch of his hand. In the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ the Arabs were boastful of their oratory and linguistic capabilities. The Holy Qur'an was sent as the greatest of all miracles of the Holy prophet. It's diction and style so bewildered the Arabs that they instantly acknowledged a super human element in it. The sorcerers came to Pharaoh and said:

إِنَّ لَنَا لَأَجْرًا إِن كُنَّا نَحْنُ الْغَالِبِينَ

"There must be a reward for us, if we are the victors." (113)

He said,

نَعَمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِمَنِ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ

"Yes, and of course, you will be among the closer ones." (114)

The sorcerers were invited from all over the country. When they all

came to Pharaoh they asked him of some reward if they gain victory over Mūsā عليه السلام. He promised that in addition to their reward they shall be included among those close to him. The historical reports about the number of these sorcerers give us different information. These give us a number from nine hundred to three hundred thousand. The quantity of the staves and strings used in this contest is reported to be as great as was loaded on three hundred camels. (Qurtubī)

It may be noted that the first thing the sorcerers did, was to have an assurance about the reward they will get in return of their performance. It is because worldly people are always after worldly gains. They do nothing unless they are sure of their gains, while on the contrary, the prophets and their disciples always declare:

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

I do not ask you for a reward, as my reward is with the Lord of all the worlds.' (26:109)

That is, the prophets of Allah preach and convey the message of Allah only for the good and guidance of people and they seek no financial gain against it. They seek their reward from Allah alone. After this discourse with Pharaoh the sorcerers got the place and date fixed for the great encounter. An open land was chosen for the purpose and the time was fixed after the sunrise on their festival Day. It is also mentioned in a verse of the Holy Qur'an: Mūsā عليه السلام said: قَالَ مُوعِدَكُمْ يَوْمَ الزَّيْنَةِ وَأَنْ يُخَشِّرَ النَّاسَ صُحُىَّ "your appointed day is the day of 'zīnah' so that people may be gathered after sunrise." (20:59)

Some reports say that the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام had a short conversation with the chief of the sorcerers and asked him if they would accept the faith in case he defeated them? He said that there was no question of their being defeated as they possessed such great magical powers that could not be overcome by any one. And in case 'you bring defeat to us we shall declare our faith openly in the presence of the Pharaoh'. (Mazharī and Qurtubī)

They said,

قَالُوا يَمُوسَى إِمَّا أَنْ تُلْقَى وَإِمَّا أَنْ نَكُونَ نَحْنُ الْمُلْقِينَ

"O Mūsā either you throw (first) or shall we be the ones to throw."

The Arabic word: *إِلْقَا* *ilqā* means to drop something down. On the day of encounter the sorcerers asked the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام if he would drop down his staff first or should they throw theirs first? This question of the sorcerers was perhaps to show their complacency about their art, though the mode of their sentence indicated that they wanted to start first, but for giving an impression of power to their opponent they put that question. Since the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام had nothing to fear about, he invited them saying 'you drop.'

Ibn Kathīr has said that the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام behaved with them politely by inviting them to have their turn first. The effect of this behaviour was that they accepted the faith after their defeat. Here we are faced with a question. The sorcery is an impermissible act, specially when it is used to oppose a prophet sent by Allah it becomes an act of infidelity. How then the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام gave permission of magic to the sorcerers by saying 'you drop'? With a little thought we can find the answer. It was certain that the sorcerers will show their magic by all means. The point of conversation was to decide who should start the contest. The prophet Mūsā عليه السلام allowed them to begin. Another advantage of this strategy was that the people could see their performance and the sorcerers had all the time to show their art and turn the staves into snakes. Then the staff of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام should turn into a serpent and eat up all the snakes, thus the open defeat of magic should be exhibited before the people. (Bayān- al- Qur'ān)

فَلَمَّا أَفْقُوا سَعَوْا سَحَرُوا أَعْيُنَ النَّاسِ وَاسْتَرْهَبُوهُمْ وَجَاءُوا بِسِحْرٍ عَظِيمٍ

So, when they threw, they bewitched the eyes of the people, and made them frightened, and came out with great sorcery.

(116)

This verse indicates that this demonstration of their magic was just a bewitching of the eyes of the people which made them see the staves and strings as snakes leaping on the ground, while the strings and the staves did not change physically. It was a kind of mesmerism hypnotising the minds of the onlookers. This does not mean that sorcery is confined only in this kind and that it cannot change something into another, as we do not have any proof against it. On the contrary, many forms and kinds of magic have been taken as being

reality. The terms magic and sorcery are usually applied for all the acts that seem to be happening in unusual way. Sleight of hand, telepathic influences and mesmerism are sometimes called magic. Transformation of one thing into another through magic may be a possibility but we have no valid reason or proof for or against it.

The next verse 117 said, "وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَلْقِ عَصَاكَ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَلْقَفُ مَا يَأْكُمُونَ" And We revealed to Mūsā 'Throw your staff.' Then, of a sudden it began to swallow all that they had concocted." We find it reported in history, when thousands of staffs and ropes were turned into snakes leaping all over the ground, Allah commanded Mūsā عليه السلام to drop down his staff on the ground. It turned into a great snake and instantly began to eat up the snakes of the sorcerers. The crowd stood bewildered and stunned at this sight. Within no time all the snakes were eaten up by the great snake of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام. Next, the verse said:

فَوَقَعَ الْحَقُّ وَبَطَلَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ . فَغَلَبُوا هُنَالِكَ وَ انْقَلَبُوا صَاغِرِينَ . وَأَلْقَى السَّحَرَةُ سِحْرَ بَدِينٍ . قَالُوا 'إِمْتَنَّا رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ . رَبِّ مُوسَى وَ هَارُونَ .

"So, the truth prevailed and what they were doing became a nullity. So there they were overcome and turned humiliated. And the sorcerers were constrained to fall in prostration. They said, "We believe in the Lord of the worlds, the Lord of Mūsā and Hārūn."

The sorcerers were so overawed by the miracle of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام that they fell in prostration. This may also imply that Allah blessed them with favour and put them in prostration. They added the phrase, the Lord of Mūsā عليه السلام and Harun after saying, the Lord of the worlds, to make it clear that the Lord worshipped by Mūsā عليه السلام and Hārūn is, in fact, the Lord of the Universe, and not the Pharaoh as he pretended to be.

Verses- 123 - 127

قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ 'أَمْسَيْتُمْ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ أَدْنَىٰ لَكُمْ . إِنَّ هَذَا لَمَكْرٌ مَّكْرُمُوهُ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ لِتُخْرِجُوا مِنْهَا أَهْلَهَا . فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٢٣﴾ لَا قَطِيعَ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ مِّنْ خِلَافٍ ثُمَّ لَا صَلْبَتَكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٢٤﴾ قَالُوا

إِنَّا إِلَىٰ رَبِّنَا مُنْقَلِبُونَ ﴿١٢٥﴾ وَمَا تَنْفَعُ مِنَّا إِلَّا أَنْ أَمَّا بِأَيْتِ رَبِّنَا
لَمَّا جَاءَنَا رَبَّنَا أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَتَوَقَّنَا مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿١٢٦﴾ وَقَالَ
الْمَلَأُ مِنْ قَوْمِ فِرْعَوْنَ أَتَذَرُ مُوسَىٰ وَقَوْمَهُ لِيُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ
وَيَذَرَكَ وَالْهَتَكَ قَالَ سَنُقَتِّلُ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَنَسْتَحْيِي نِسَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّا
فَوْقَهُمْ قَاهِرُونَ ﴿١٢٧﴾

The Pharaoh said, "You have believed in him before I permitted you. No doubt, this is a device you have devised in the city, so that you may expel it's people from there. Now you shall know (it's end). [123] I shall certainly, cut apart your hands and your legs from opposite sides. Then I shall crucify you all together." [124] They said, "We are surely to return to our Lord. [125] You punish us for no other reason but that we have believed in the signs of our Lord when they came to us. "O our Lord, pour out patience upon us and let the death take us while we are Muslims (the faithful)." [126]

And the chiefs of the people of the Pharaoh said, "Do you leave Mūsā عليه السلام and his people that they spread disorder in the land while he leaves you and your gods?" He said, " We shall slaughter their sons and let their women live. And we have full power over them." [127]

The foregoing verses had a detailed account of the contest between the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and the sorcerers and that after their defeat the sorcerers declared their faith in Allah. Some historical reports say that subsequent to their declaration of faith in Allah, six hundred thousand more people followed suit and declared their belief in Allah. Before this open contest there were only two individuals believing in Allah. Now a great army of people became Muslims. It was, obviously an embarrassing situation for the Pharaoh. Like a clever politician he managed to conceal his state of mind before the people, and changed the situation by putting the blame of conspiracy and rebellion on the sorcerers. He claimed that they had joined hands with Mūsā عليه السلام and Harūn in order to create disorder in the country. Then he said to the sorcerers, "You have believed in him before I permitted you." This was a threat to the sorcerers on the one hand, and on the other, he tried to convince his people that the sorcerers made a hasty decision in

accepting their faith and fell prey to the trap of Mūsā عليه السلام and Hārūn. Otherwise, he would have also believed in him in case Mūsā عليه السلام and Hārūn proved truthful in their claim.

It was a clever design of Pharaoh. He tried to keep his people stay in their former ignorance and make people believe that the contest was pre-plotted between the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and the sorcerers. He cleverly twisted the fact that the miracle of Mūsā عليه السلام and the open conversion of the sorcerers to the true Faith was purely to expose the ignorance and falsehood of the Pharaoh. He turned it into a political issue by saying, "So that you may expel it's people from there." He wanted to make his people believe that they planned the whole matter to gain power over the country and expel the people from there.

After making all these strategic statements he threatened the sorcerers, first, with an indefinite remark saying, "Now you shall know (your end)". Further specifying the threat, He said, لَا قَطْعَ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَأَرْجُلِكُمْ مِنْ خِلَافِ ثُمَّ لَا صَلْبَتَكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ "I shall surely, cut your hands and legs from the opposite sides. Then I shall crucify you all together." By cutting from the opposite sides he meant the right hand and the left foot so that they are made completely disabled and invalid.

The Pharaoh made all the efforts that he could to control his people. The belief in Allah, or 'Īmān' as it is called by the Qur'ān, is a great power. When it finds it's way into one's heart, one finds himself as powerful as to face the whole world and all the forces gathered together against him. This was a great change. Only a few hours ago, the sorcerers were the worshippers of Pharaoh, but having faith in Allah they demonstrated such a great power and courage that in response to all the threats to their lives by the Pharaoh, they only said with perfect satisfaction that, in that case, إِنَّا إِلَىٰ رَبِّنَا مُنْقَلِبُونَ "To our Lord we are sure to return."

The sorcerers were fully aware of Pharaoh's power and authority over them. They did not say that Pharaoh will not be able to kill them because of their new faith. Their answer was to suggest that the whole life of this temporary world had no value in their eyes. Their satisfaction was due to the fact that they were sure of meeting the Lord of the worlds after passing away from this world. There they shall get an everlasting life of peace and comfort.

Another interpretation of their answer is that though the Pharaoh had all the power to finish their life, but soon he will be presented before the Lord of the worlds where he shall be taken to account for his despotism. In another verse, the following statement is also included in the answer of the sorcerers, **فَاقْضِ مَا أَنْتَ قَاضٍ إِنَّمَا تَقْضِي هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا** "You may pass any judgement you can against us, but your judgement will be restricted to this worldly life." (72:20) This also shows their total indifference towards the temporary life of this world. This great change in their thought and action was the result of their true faith in Allah. In addition to this, their faith opened the door of knowledge and wisdom upon them which is manifest from their invocation to Allah at this occasion. They prayed, **رَبَّنَا أَنْزِلْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَ تَوَقَّنَا مُسْلِمِينَ** "O Allah! Shower upon us patience and let death take us while we are Muslims." This prayer is not only a manifestation of knowledge and wisdom, but also the best means of getting out of the difficulty they were in. It is because perseverance and patience are the only keys to success over one's enemy.

The report of the commission formed for investigating the causes and effects of the World War has remarked that the Muslims who observe faith in Allah and in the Hereafter are the most valiant and brave people in the battle field, and the most patient in the times of difficulty because they have faith in Allah and in the Hereafter. This is why the German military officials, expert in military sciences, emphatically suggested that they should create honesty and sense of accountability in the Hereafter among their soldiers, as they are the great source of strength and courage. (Tafsīr al-Manār)

It Was A Miracle

The instant perfect change of mind of the sorcerers was, in no way, a lesser miracle than the other miracles of the prophet **Mūsā عليه السلام**. Those who led a life of infidelity and ignorance for their whole life were instantly changed into the most cognizant, knowledgeable and true Muslims, as faithful as to readily sacrifice their life for their faith. It is a pity that the Muslims and the Muslim states are trying all other ways and means to make themselves powerful and strong, but have become neglectful of the real source of power and strength. That is faith, perseverance and patience.

Pharaoh was frightened

It is to be noted that the Pharaoh was in some degree successful in keeping his ignorant people in their former ignorance through his clever and false statements, but at the same time, they strangely noted that all the fury and rage of Pharaoh was limited to the sorcerers only. He did not dare say a word against the prophets Mūsā عليه السلام and Hārūn who were his real opponents. This is obvious from the following statement of his people: *أَتَذَرُ مُوسَى وَقَوْمَهُ لِيُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَيَذَرَكَ وَالْهَيْكَلُ* "Do you leave Mūsā عليه السلام and his people alone to spread disorder in the land, even when he abandons you and your gods?"

Pharaoh had no convincing answer to this question. He only said, *سَنَقْتُلُ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَنَسْتَحْيِي نِسَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّا فَوْقَهُمْ قَاهِرُونَ* "We shall slaughter their sons and let their women live, and we have full power over them."

According to the commentators of the Holy Qur'an, Pharaoh tried to satisfy his people saying that by killing their males and leaving their women alive, he shall totally eliminate them within a period of time. Their women shall be spared to serve his people as maid servants. In fact, Pharaoh was so frightened by the miracle of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام that even at this occasion when he was threatening to kill all the men of Israelites, he could not utter a single word of threat against Mūsā and Hārūn عليهم السلام Maulānā Rūmī said :

هرکه ترسید از حق و تقوی گزید

ترسید از وی جن و انس و هرکه دید

"Whoever adopts 'Taqwā' and fears Allah is feared by all human beings and spirits".

The above statement of Pharaoh's people, 'Even when he abandons you and your gods' makes us understand that Pharaoh himself used to worship other gods, even though he claimed to be the god of his people. The law about killing of the males of the Israelites and leaving their women alive was now promulgated the second time. The first time it was put into force prior to the birth of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام. He was witnessing the failure of this law up to this day which was evident from the huge crowd of the Israelites present at this occasion. When

Allah intends to bring disgrace to a people, all they contrive leads to nothing but disaster. We shall soon see that this tyranny and oppression, at last, led him and his people to an ignominious end.

Verses 128-132

قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ اسْتَعِينُوا بِاللَّهِ وَاصْبِرُوا إِنَّ الْأَرْضَ لِلَّهِ
يُورِثُهَا مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ۖ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٢٨﴾
قَالُوا أَوْذَيْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ أَنْ تَأْتِيَنَا وَمِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جِئْتَنَا قَالَ
عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَنْ يَهْلِكَ عَدُوُّكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ
فَيَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٢٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ أَخَذْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ بِالسِّنِينَ
وَنَقْصِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُونَ ﴿١٣٠﴾ فَاذَا جَاءَتْهُمْ
الْحُسْنَىٰ قَالُوا لَنَا هَذِهِ وَإِنْ تُصِيبُهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَطَّيَّرُوا بِمُوسَىٰ وَمَنْ
مَعَهُ ۚ أَلَا إِنَّمَا طَائِرُهُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ
﴿١٣١﴾ وَقَالُوا مَهْمَا تَأْتِنَا بِهِ مِنْ آيَةٍ لِنَسْحَرَنَّ بِهَا ۖ فَمَا نَحْنُ
لَكَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣٢﴾

And Mūsā said to his people, "Seek help from Allah and be patient. Surely, the land belongs to Allah. He lets whomsoever He wills, from among His slaves, inherit it. And the end-result is in favour of the God-fearing." [128] They said, "We were persecuted before you came to us, as well as, after you have come to us." He said, "It is likely that your Lord will destroy your enemy and make you successors in the earth, then He will see how you act." [129]

And We seized the people of the Pharaoh with years of famine and loss of fruits, so that they may take lesson. [130] So when something good came to them they said, 'This is our right.' And if they suffered from something evil, they ascribed it as an ill omen to Mūsā and those with him. Listen, their omen lies with Allah only, but most of them do not know. [131]

And they said, "whatever sign you bring to us to

enchant us therewith, we are not going to believe in you." [132]

After being defeated by the prophet Mūsā, عليه السلام Pharaoh enforced the law of killing the male children of the Israelites. They were greatly alarmed of the punishment they had experienced before the coming of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام. The prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was also mindful of this fact. Out of his kindness, he offered two wise solutions to the Israelites. He said to them that only way of getting out of this trial was, firstly, to seek help from Allah and, secondly, to remain patient until the things change into their favour. He also promised them that they shall inherit the whole land if they faithfully observed the two instructions. This is what the verse said: *اسْتَعِظُوا بِاللّٰهِ* "Seek help from Allah and be patient; surely, the land belongs to Allah, He lets whomsoever He wills inherit it, from among his servants." This implies that all the lands belong to Allah, and He lets whomsoever He wills inherit the land. And decidedly the end result is for the God-fearing. So, if they observe 'Taqwā' (keep away from disobedience) by acting upon the two instruction offered above they shall ultimately rule the whole country.

The Only Way To Success

A little reflection over the above two teachings of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام will show that it is the sovereign remedy which never fails against any difficulty. The first ingredient of this recipe is seeking help from Allah which is the essence of the remedy. It is for the obvious reason that if the Creator of the universe comes to one's help who is there to stop Him? Maulānā Rūmī said in a couplet:

خاک و بادو آب و آتش بنده اند

با من وتو مرده با حق زنده اند

"The earth, the air, the water and the fire, all are servants of Allah. To me and to You they are dead, but to Allah they are full of life."

It is reported in a Hadīth: When Allah wills to do something everything turns in favour of that purpose. Therefore, nothing is more powerful against an enemy than seeking Allah's help with all the sincerity of one's heart. Simply uttering out some formula words for seeking help are not enough.

The second important ingredient of the recipe is being patient. The Arabic word 'Ṣabr' rendered as patience literally signifies to keep oneself under one's control against unfavourable happenings. It is common knowledge that nothing significant can be achieved without undergoing difficulties and hardships. One who readily prepares himself to face hardships is generally successful in most of his objectives. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said in a Tradition, "No greater blessing has been given to any one other than patience." (Abū Dāwūd)

The Israelites who seemed to have no conception of such matters could not understand how patience alone could free them from Pharaoh's punishment and bring them success against him. They blamed the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام saying:

قَالُوا أَوَدِينَا مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَأْتِيَنَا وَمِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جِئْتَنَا

'We have been persecuted before you came to us as well as after you came to us.'

What they meant, perhaps, was that they were looking for a prophet to deliver them from the oppression of the Pharaoh, but their fate remained unchanged even after he came to them. The prophet Mūsā عليه السلام answered to them:

عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَنْ يَهْلِكَ عَدُوُّكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ

'It is likely that your Lord will destroy your enemy and make you successors in the earth that He may see how then, you act.'

Sovereignty is a test

The last phrase of the verse has provided with a wise observation that sovereignty or dominion is not in itself an aim or objective but a means to achieve the objective of making peace and justice prevail in the land. Sovereignty or dominion is a sacred trust bestowed upon by Allah for making good prevail over evil. The verse has warned them that, in case they are bestowed this trust, they should not forget the ill fate of those who were before them.

Though the direct addressee of the verse are the Israelites, but indirectly the verse has thrown a warning to all those trusted with rule or dominion. Sovereignty or power, in fact, belongs to Allah alone. Allah has made man his deputy on the earth. He is the One who desig-

nates man with power and takes it away when He so wills. This is what the following verse means:

تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ

"You give power to whom You please, and You strip off power from whom You please." (3:26)

The power and rule, therefore, is a test for the rulers to see how far they have fulfilled their duty of establishing peace and justice and making good prevail over evil.

Abū Ḥayyān in his Tafsīr Al-Baḥr-al Muḥīṭ has included the following event under the comments on this verse: 'Amr ibn 'Ubaid once visited Maṣṣūr, the second caliph of the Abbaside dynasty, prior to his designation to caliphate and recited this verse: 'It is likely that Allah will destroy your enemy and make you successor in the earth.' This was a sort of prediction by 'Amr ibn 'Ubaid of his succession to the throne. Soon after Maṣṣūr succeeded to the throne and became the Caliph. 'Amr ibn 'Ubaid came to the Caliph again. Maṣṣūr reminded him of the prediction made by him. Amr ibn 'Ubaid instantly answered, "Well, the first part of the prediction has come true and you have become the Caliph, but the second part of it still remains unfulfilled. The verse also contains this phrase, فَيَنْظُرُ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ "Then, He will see how you act." Amr ibn 'Ubaid suggested that gaining power is not a matter of pride because thereafter, Allah judges the acts of those in authority and sees how they make use of this trust.

The next verses speak of the events that led Pharaoh and his people to a number of calamities sent to them as punishment and finally led them to their death. The first heavenly punishment came to them in the form of famine. According to historical reports this famine lasted for seven years.

"And We seized the people of the Pharaoh with years of famine and loss of fruits, so that they may take lesson. So when something good came to them they said, 'This is our right.' And if they suffered from something evil, they ascribed it as an ill omen to Mūsā عليه السلام and those with him. Listen, their omen lies with Allah only, but most of them do not know."

The first verse has described the famine with two phrases: 'years of

famine' and 'loss of fruits.' The respected Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and the commentator Qatādah have said that the punishment of drought was for the people of the rural areas, while people living in cities and towns were punished by the loss of fruits. When a people are stamped with the wrath of Allah they lose their faculty of distinguishing right from wrong. Pharaoh and his people too, had lost their understanding. They did not take lesson from this warning. On the contrary, they ascribed the calamity to be a bad presage from the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and his people. The verse said, 'So when something good came to them they said, 'This is our right.' And if they suffered from something evil, they ascribed it as an ill omen to Mūsā عليه السلام and those with him. Listen, their omen lies with Allah only, but most of them do not know."

The Arabic word: طَائِر 'Tā'ir' used for omen signifies a bird. The Arabs had a superstition that a bird coming down to their right or left meant a good or bad fate. The verse implies that good or bad fate comes from Allah. Everything in this world happens under the will of Allah. No one is there to bring good or bad fate to any one. It is sheer ignorance to believe in such things and base their activities on such baseless assumptions. The last verse describes their rejection of the truth in these words:

And they said, 'مَهْمَا تَأْتَيْنَا بِهِ مِنْ آيَةٍ لِنُسْحَرَنَّا بِهَا فَمَا تَحْنُ لَكَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ 'Whatever sign you bring to us in order to enchant us therewith, we are not going to believe in you."

Verses 133 - 136

فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الطُّوفَانَ وَالْجَرَادَ وَالْقُمَّلَ وَالضَّفَادِعَ وَالْدَّمَ
 آيَةً مُفَصَّلَاتٍ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا مُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾ وَلَمَّا
 وَقَعَ عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّجْزُ قَالُوا يُمُوسَى اادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ بِمَا عَهِدَ
 عِنْدَكَ لَئِنْ كَشَفْتَ عَنَّا الرِّجْزَ لَنُؤْمِنَنَّ لَكَ وَلَنُرْسِلَنَّ مَعَكَ
 بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ ﴿١٣٤﴾ فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ الرِّجْزَ إِلَى آجَلٍ هُمْ
 بِالْغَوَةِ إِذَا هُمْ يَنْكُثُونَ ﴿١٣٥﴾ فَانْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ فِي

الْيَمِّ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا عَنْهَا غَافِلِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾

So We sent upon them the storm and locusts, and pests, frogs and blood, signs distinct from each other. Yet they showed arrogance and they were a guilty people.

[133] **And when the punishment fell upon them, they said, "O Mūsā, pray for us to your Lord by the covenant He has made with you. If you remove the punishment from us, we shall surely believe in you and shall send the children of Isra'īl with you."** [134]

So when We removed the punishment from them, for a period of time that they had to reach, they suddenly started to break the promise. [135] Then we took vengeance from them, and drowned them in the sea, for they belied Our signs and were neglectful of them.

[136]

The above verses relate the next part of the story of the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and the people of Pharaoh. According to historical reports, the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام stayed in Egypt for 20 years. He kept preaching consistently and conveyed the message of Allah to them. He was given nine miracles during his stay in Egypt which served as warnings to the people of Pharaoh. The Holy Qur'an has referred to the nine miracles in these words. وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى تِسْعَ آيَاتٍ "Surely, We gave him nine miracles."

Out of the nine miracles, two were performed before Pharaoh and his people. The third miracle was of famine reported in verse 130. The above verses speak of the remaining six miracles. The verse 133 has mentioned five punishments coming to the people of Pharaoh. All these punishments have been termed as 'signs distinct from each other.' According to the comments of the respected Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās each of these punishments lasted for a fixed period of time followed by a period of relief followed by the next punishment.

Ibn-al-Mundhir has cited from the Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās that each punishment lasted for seven days starting from Saturday, then they were given three weeks of relief. Imām al-Baghawī, citing the Companion 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas said that the first time when they were relieved of famine by asking the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام to pray

Allah for their relief, they did not keep the promise of believing in Allah. The prophet Mūsā عليه السلام prayed Allah that they may be inflicted with some painful punishment so that it serves as a lesson to his people and to their descendants. Allah first sent a storm upon them. According to great commentators, this was a flood. All the lands and houses of the people of Pharaoh were filled and surrounded by the water leaving for them no place for farming and living in their homes. The strange thing about it was that the lands and houses of the Israelites were not affected by the water of the flood.

In a state of great distress they came to the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and requested him to pray Allah for their relief from this calamity. They promised that if they are relieved from the flood they would embrace faith in Allah and let the Israelites go with him from Egypt. The prayer of the prophet was acceded to and the storm subsided. It is reported that their fields were more fertile and productive than before. Again they did not keep their promise and said that the storm was not a punishment from Allah. Rather it came to their benefit and the increase in the produce was the result of the flood and that Mūsā عليه السلام had nothing to do with it.

A period of respite was given to them to reflect and realize their error. After a period of one month another punishment was sent to them in the form of locusts which ate up all the crops and fruits. Some reports say that the locusts devoured even their doors and roofs made of wood and other things of their houses. Again they were surprised to notice that the locusts did not do any harm to the houses and fields of the Israelites which were quite close to them. Once again they cried for help and implored to the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام to pray his Lord for taking away this punishment from them and that they make firm promise to believe in him and free the Israelites after their relief. The prophet Mūsā عليه السلام prayed Allah for their relief again and they got rid of this chastisement.

Seeing that they were left with enough grain to suffice them for one year, they turned against their promise and showed arrogance as before. Once again, a period of peace and relief followed. The third punishment came to them of 'Qummal' rendered here as pest. Qummal in Arabic is used for 'louse' as well as for an insect which eats up

grain. It is possible that both kinds of insects were sent to them, that is, small pests started to eat up their grain while equally large number of lice ate up even their hair and eyelashes. Exasperated as they were, they came again to prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and asked him to pray Allah for their riddance, promising again their acceptance of the true faith and release of the Israelites. He prayed Allah for their relief and Allah relieved them of this punishment too.

The fourth punishment was of the frogs. The frogs were created in such a large number in their houses that they covered them up to their necks. The frogs covered them in their beds when they came to sleep. All of their cooking pans and utensils and their household were full of frogs. Being highly disgusted with this situation they came again to prophet Mūsā عليه السلام, with all their old promises, and asked him to pray for their deliverance. This time also they were relieved of this punishment. They were given enough time to correct themselves but those who incur Allah's wrath are deprived of positive thinking. This time when they were in peace they said that they were sure that Mūsā عليه السلام was a sorcerer and not a messenger of Allah. Those mishaps to them were the effect of his sorcery.

After a month of relief the next punishment visiting them was that of blood. Everything of their use turned into blood. Their drinks, their food and their water became all blood before they could use them. As they took out water from the wells or tanks it turned into blood. History has reported it was strange that whenever the Egyptians and the Israelites sat together for meal the morsel of food taken by the Egyptian became all blood, while the one taken by an Israelite did not change. This punishment too lasted for seven days. They were relieved of this punishment through the prayer of the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام after their usual false promises.

The people of Pharaoh were subjected to the above five punishments one after another but they persisted in their arrogance and showed no sign of taking lesson from these warnings. The sixth punishment has been mentioned in the Qur'ān by the Arabic word: رجز 'Rijz' which signifies plague or pestilence. The number of Egyptians killed in this plague is reported to have been more than seventy thousand. They were relieved of this punishment by the prayer of the

prophet Mūsā عليه السلام. Again they broke their promise as before. Now, when they showed no sign of understanding they were finally caught by the last punishment - the death. Leaving behind all their lands, houses and possessions they chased the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and his people and were drowned in the sea.

Verse 137 - 141

وَأَوْرَثْنَا الْقَوْمَ الَّذِينَ كَانُوا يُسْتَضْعَفُونَ مَشَارِقَ الْأَرْضِ
وَمَغَارِبَهَا الَّتِي بَرَكْنَا فِيهَا ۖ وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ الْحُسْنَىٰ عَلَىٰ
بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ بِمَا صَبَرُوا ۖ وَدَمَرْنَا مَا كَانَ يَصْنَعُ فِرْعَوْنُ
وَقَوْمُهُ ۖ وَمَا كَانُوا يَعْرِشُونَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ وَجَاوَزْنَا بِبَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ
الْبَحْرَ فَاتَوَا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ يَتْعَكِفُونَ عَلَىٰ أَصْنَامٍ لَهُمْ قَالُوا
يُمُوسَىٰ اجْعَلْ لَنَا إِلَهًا كَمَا لَهُمْ آلِهَةٌ ۚ قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُونَ
﴿١٣٨﴾ إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ مُتَّبِعُونَ مَا هُم بِفِيهِ ۖ وَبِطُلَّ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ
﴿١٣٩﴾ قَالَ أَغِيرَ اللَّهِ أَبْغِيكُمْ إِلَهًا وَهُوَ فَضَّلَكُمْ عَلَى
الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٤٠﴾ وَإِذْ أَنْجَيْنَاكُمْ مِنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُومُونَكُمْ
سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ ۖ يَقْتُلُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ ۚ وَفِي
ذَلِكَ بَلَاءٌ مِّنْ رَبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٤١﴾

And We made those people who were taken as weak, the inheritors of the easts of the land and of it's wests which We had blessed. And the sublime word of your Lord was fulfilled for the children of Isrā'īl, because they stood patient. And We destroyed what Pharaoh and his people used to build and what they used to raise high. [137]

And We made the children of Isrā'īl cross the sea, then, they came across a people sitting in devotion before their idols. They (the Israelites) said, "O Mūsā, make a god for us like they have gods." He said, "You are really an ignorant people. [138] What these people are in, is sure to be destroyed; and false is what they

are doing." [139] He said, "Shall I seek any one other than Allah as God for you, while He has given you excellence over the (people of all the) worlds." [140] And (remember) when We delivered you from the people of Pharaoh, who inflicted you with grievous torment, slaughtered your sons and left your women alive and in all that there was great trial from your Lord. [141]

The previous verses contained an account of the warnings from Allah to the people of Pharaoh. The present verses speak of their ignominious end, and of the success of the Israelites. The verse 137 said, "And We made the people, who were taken to be weak, the inheritors of the land, of easts and wests which We had blessed." The verse did not say, the people who were weak, rather it said, those who were taken as weak. It implies that those having Allah as their support can never be weak in the real sense of the word, though they may seem so from their apparent condition. People finally come to realise that they are not weak. It is because dignity and honour all belong to Allah. The verse has used the term inheritance for their domination in the land to indicate that like a son who deserves to be a real inheritor of his father's land and possessions, the Israelites were the real inheritors of the land and wealth of Pharaoh's people.

The words 'east' and 'west' have been used in plural perhaps to denote the different points of sunset and sunrise in winter and summer time. The word 'land', according to all experts in exegesis, refers to the land of Egypt and Syria which was brought under the domination of the Israelites after the people of Pharaoh and the Amaleks were destroyed. The phrase 'Which We had blessed' refers to the lands of Syria and Egypt. The Holy Qur'ān has referred to Syria as the land of Barakah (blessing). Similarly the land of Egypt has been referred to as the land of blessing in a number of Traditions. The Caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb has referred to river Nile as the prince of all rivers. The Companion 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar said that Egypt has nine parts of blessing out of ten. The tenth part has been divided throughout the earth. (Al-Baḥr-a-Muḥīṭ)

In short, the verse has to say that the people who were considered weak and abject were made the rulers of the land possessed by those who showed arrogance. It shows how the promise made by Allah and

His Messenger came out true as it always does. The verse said, 'The sublime word of your Lord was fulfilled.' The promise in this verse either refers to the promise made by the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام with his people mentioned in verse 129 which said, 'It is very likely that our Lord will destroy your enemy and make you successor in the earth.' Or it refers to the promise made by Allah to the Israelites in a verse of Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ (the Stories) It said, "

وَنُرِيدُ أَنْ نَمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ
الْوَارِثِينَ وَنُفَكِّكَنَّ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ نِيرِينَ وَنُرَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ وَجُنُودَهُمَا مِنْهُمْ مَا
كَانُوا يُحَذِّرُونَ ۝

"And it was Our will that We favour those considered weak in the earth and make them leaders, and make them the inheritors, and give them power in the land, and show Pharaoh, Hāman and their armies, the very thing they dreaded." (28:5)

In fact, both the above promises are one and the same. The promise made by the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام obviously was derived by the promise of Allah. This favour of Allah upon the people of Israel was the reward of their patience, as the verse has specified saying 'Because they stood patient.' That is, they were favoured by Allah for their being patient in their distress. This has an understated indication that any people or individual following the same example, at any time and in any place, shall get the same reward. The prophet Mūsā عليه السلام when making the promise of gaining the rule over the land had emphatically said that perseverance, patience and seeking help from Allah was the only key to success.

Sheikh Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said that the verse suggested that in case one is not as powerful as to defend himself against an enemy, the best way to success is to remain patient. He said when a person who has been wronged, tries to take revenge on his own by doing wrong to his opponent Allah leaves him alone and lets him manage his own affairs, ending in success or facing a failure. On the contrary, when one seeks help from Allah against the affliction from others and remains patient, Allah opens the door of success upon him. As the above promise for the rule over the land was fulfilled by Allah, the same kind of promise

Allah made with the people of the prophet Muḥammad in a verse of Sūrah Al-Nūr:

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا
اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ

"Allah has promised those of you who believe and do good deeds that he will make them inherit the land, as He had inherited those who were before them." (24:55)

As the Israelites witnessed the fulfillment of Allah's promise by having their rule over the land, similarly the Muslim Ummah witnessed the fulfillment of Allah's promise in the form of their sovereignty over the major part of the earth (Rūḥ al-Bayān). It is not justified to say that the Israelites did not observe patience, because when Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام asked them to be patient they said that they were persecuted before and after he came to them. Firstly, because their patience against the constant persecution at the hands of Pharaoh and his people is a proven fact. Secondly, the above statement might not be a complaint but a simple expression of their grief. Thereafter, the verse said, "وَدَمَّرْنَا مَا كَانَ يَصْنَعُ فِرْعَوْنُ وَقَوْمُهُ وَمَا كَانُوا يَعْرُشُونَ" "And We destroyed whatever Pharaoh and his people used to build and what they used to raise high." This refers to the buildings they raised high and their trees etc. 'What they used to build' may also refer to their ill designs against the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام. 'What they used to raise high' is a reference to their mansions and to their trees.

The events discussed up to this point were related to the destruction of Pharaoh and his people. The next verses describe the victory and success of the Israelites followed by their insolence in spite of all the blessings they received from Allah. These verses provide a kind of solace to the Holy Prophet ﷺ against his grief at the obstinacy of the unbelievers, by showing the annoyance of the early prophets at the hands of their people.

After the miraculous victory of the Israelites over Pharaoh and his people, and having a life of ease and comfort, they started to show the signs of ignorance as people of wealth show when given a life of luxury and opulence. The first impertinent request they made was to the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام to make for them a god like the gods of the

people they saw being worshipped on their way. They (the Israelites) said, *يَا مُوسَى اجْعَلْ لَنَا إِلَهًا كَمَا لَهُم آلِهَةٌ*, "O Mūsā make a god for us like their gods." He said, *قَالَ انْكُمْ قَوْمٌ تَبْهَلُونَ*, "You are really an ignorant people." The prophet Mūsā was greatly annoyed by their ignorance and said that the labour of worship of those people was to go waste. How could he think of making for them a god other than Allah while he had given to them excellence over the people of all the worlds. That is, the people who believed in the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام were superior to all the people of that age.

The next verses remind them of their pitiable condition and their persecutions at the hands of Pharaoh when their sons were killed and their daughters were saved to serve them as their maid-servants. Allah relieved them of this disgraceful chastisement through His prophet. Shall they be as ungrateful to their Lord as to take the abject stones as gods and make them partners with Allah? They must repent to Allah for their transgression.

Verse 142

وَأَعَدْنَا مُوسَى ثَلَاثِينَ لَيْلَةً وَأَتَمَمْنَاهَا بِعَشْرِ فِتْنٍ مِيقَاتُ رَبِّهِ
 أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً وَقَالَ مُوسَى لِأَخِيهِ هَارُونَ اخْلُفْنِي فِي قَوْمِي
 وَأَصْلِحْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿١٤٢﴾

And We made a promise with Mūsā for thirty nights, then We supplemented them with ten. So, the total period fixed by his Lord was forty nights. And Mūsā said to his brother Hārūn, "Take my place among my people and keep things right, and do not follow the way of mischief makers." [142]

This verse speaks of the period followed by the destruction of the Pharaoh and his people. Having a peaceful time after their deliverance from the Pharaoh and his people the Israelites requested the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام to have some religious system of law so that they may act upon it. The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام prayed Allah for a code of guidance for them. The Arabic word: *واعدنا*, *wā'adana* is a derivative of *وعد*, *wa'dah* which signifies a worded expression of offering something good to someone - a promise.

Allah made a promise to Mūsā عليه السلام to send His word to him. It was stipulated that Mūsā عليه السلام should go to the mount of Sināi and pass thirty nights there sitting in devotion for Allah. These thirty nights were later supplemented with ten more nights to make them forty.

There are some points in this verse which demand our attention: Firstly, the number of nights to be passed by the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was fixed to be forty nights in the will of Allah. Why was he first asked to pass thirty nights, and then add ten more nights? No one, in fact, can have access to all the wisdom and insight contained in divine acts. The scholars, however, have provided with some explanations: The famous commentary 'Rūḥ al-Bayān' states that one of the wisdom behind the above commandment is of enjoining the laws gradually or by degrees to make it easier for people to practice. The commentary 'Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī' has said that this was for educating those in authority to give respite to their subordinates if they fail to complete their assignments in the prescribed time. This is what happened with Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام. When the spiritual excellence that was required could not be achieved by him in thirty nights, ten more nights were added to give him more time to acquire required perfection.

The commentators have reported that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام kept fasting constantly for thirty days and nights without breaking his fast in between. After completing thirty days he took the break fast and presented himself at the fixed point on the mount Sināi, Allah said to him that the peculiar odor generated by fasting in one's mouth is liked by Allah. Mūsā عليه السلام had lost the odor by brushing his teeth, he was therefore, required to observe fasting for ten more days in order to create the odor again.

The above reports of the loss of odor, however, cannot be taken to mean that brushing the teeth after fasting is prohibited or is something disliked, firstly, because the above report has been cited without the chain of narrators and secondly because it could be a commandment meant specifically for the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and not for other people, or peculiar to the followers of the Torah. The permissibility of brushing one's teeth during fasting is a practice proved by the Holy Tradition. Al-Baihaqī has reported the following Tradition on the

authority of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: خَيْرُ مَخَصِيلٍ الصَّائِمِ السَّوَّاءُ The best act of the one who is fasting is brushing one's teeth (with *miswak*). Al-Jami' al-Ṣaghīr has said that the status of this *Hadīth* is that of Ḥasan (a kind of authentic Tradition).

One may wonder here how the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام could be fasting continuously for thirty days without making a breakfast even at nights, while during his travel for visiting Sayyidnā Khizr (Al-Khaḍīr عليه السلام) he could not wait for even half of the day and said إِنَّا غَدَاؤُنَا لَقَدْ لَقِينَا مِنْ سَفَرِنَا هَذَا نَصَبًا "Give us our food, because this journey has made us tired." Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Bayān has explained that this difference was due to the different nature of journeys. This journey was of a created being for another created being while the journey on the mount of Sināi was for the Creator of a devoted created being who had separated himself from the Creation in quest of his Lord. This spiritual journey weakened the vigour of physical demands of hunger and thirst, making him capable of observing fast for continuous thirty days and nights.

Lunar or Solar Calendars

Another point inferred from this verse is that the laws of the Prophets counted the change of their dates at night. The above verse also has made a mention of thirty nights instead of thirty days. It is because the lunar calendar was the standard calendar in the laws of the Prophets. The beginning of the lunar month is based on sighting of the moon which is possible only at night. It is why the dates in lunar calendar are changed at sunset. Al-Qurṭubī has reported this statement on the authority of Ibn al-'Arabī حَسَابُ الشَّمْسِ لِلْمَنَافِعِ وَحَسَابُ الْقَمَرِ لِلْمَنَاسِكِ "The solar Calendar is for the benefits in worldly matters while the lunar Calendar is for religious observances."

According to the commentary of the Companion 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه the thirty nights were the nights of Zul Qa'dah, the eleventh month of the lunar Calendar. The ten nights added to them were the first ten nights of Zul-Hijjah. This makes us understand that the Torāh was given to the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام on the day of Eid-al-Aḍḥā. (Qurṭubī)

The significance of number forty

This verse also implies that the number forty has some special

effect in spiritual rectification of one's heart. It is reported in a Tradition of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that any one who worships Allah for forty days with sincerity of his heart, his heart is made a source of wisdom. (Rūh al-Bayān)

Practising Gradualism

This verse also educates people to fix a period of time for the fulfillment of their objective and to approach their aims gradually, as it is the practice of Allah to do things gradually. Haste and hurry in doing things is not approved by Allah. By creating the universe in six days while Allah had all the powers to create it instantly without requiring a single moment, He has provided people with a wise principle that they should approach their ends by stages in a period of time so that they may give due attention to their objectives. The Torah was also not given to the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام in a moment but a period was fixed for it to emphasize the same practice. (Qurtubī)

It was by ignoring this principle that the Israelites had lost their faith in Allah. The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام while leaving for the mount of Sinai had said that he would be away for thirty days. When he did not return in this period due to being retained for the next ten days, the Israelites, being unduly hasty people said that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was lost somewhere, so they should choose another leader for their guidance. Consequently, they fell prey to the sorcerer Sāmīrī and started worshipping the golden calf. Had they been a people of patience and practised gradualism, they would have not committed the fatal error of infidelity. The next sentence of the verse said, وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِأَخِيهِ هَارُونَ اخْلُفْنِي فِي قَوْمِي وَأَصْلِحْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ "Mūsā عليه السلام said to his brother Hārūn, "Take my place among my people and keep things right, and do not follow the way of mischief makers." This sentence also contains some observations of religious importance.

Making one's deputy when needed.

The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام made it a point to appoint Sayyidnā Hārūn as his deputy when he intended to leave for the mount of Sināī and said that he should take the responsibility of his people in his absence. This makes it imperative for those who hold some responsible office that they appoint someone to look after the work in their absence.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ used to appoint someone as his deputy whenever he used to leave Madīnah. The Companions 'Alī and 'Abdullāh ibn Umm Maktūm were appointed as his deputies on different occasions. (Qurtubī)

The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام gave certain instructions to the Prophet Hārūn عليه السلام before his departure to the mount of Sināī, indicating that leaving instructions or guidelines for the deputy is also a religious requirement. The first instruction given by the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was just a word "أَصْلِحْ" that is, 'set right'. The object of this imperative has not been mentioned. Possibly, he made it a general command to be observed by the Israelites and the Prophet Hārūn as well.

The second instruction was in these words: "وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ الْمُتَشَبِّهِينَ" "And do not follow the way of mischief-makers." It is obvious that Prophet Hārūn عليه السلام, being a Prophet of Allah could not be supposed to indulge in mischief. This instruction, therefore, meant that he should not do any such thing as could help or encourage the mischief makers. This is exactly what the Prophet Hārūn did when he saw his people following the magician Sāmīrī, so much so that they started worshipping the golden calf. The Prophet Hārūn عليه السلام prevented them from this act as well as admonished Sāmīrī against his mischief. Later, the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام, called him to account for this act of theirs, thinking that it was the result of inefficiency on the part of the Prophet Hārūn عليه السلام. This also serves as a lesson for those who do not care for orderly disposition of matters and take it as a sign of piousness.

Verses 143 - 145

وَلَمَّا جَاءَ مُوسَىٰ لِمِيقَاتِنَا وَكَلَّمَهُ رَبُّهُ قَالَ رَبِّ أَرِنِي أَنظُرَ إِلَيْكَ
 ، قَالَ لَنُ تَرَانِي وَلَكِنِ انْظُرْ إِلَى الْجَبَلِ فَإِنِ اسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهُ
 فَسَوْفَ تَرَانِي فَلَمَّا تَجَلَّىٰ رَبُّهُ لِلْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهُ دَكًّا وَخَرَّ مُوسَىٰ
 صَعِقًا فَلَمَّا أَفَاقَ قَالَ سُبْحَنَكَ تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
 ﴿١٤٣﴾ قَالَ يَمُوسَىٰ إِنِّي اصْطَفَيْتُكَ عَلَى النَّاسِ بِرِسَالَتِي
 وَبِكَلَامِي فَخُذْ مَا آتَيْتُكَ وَكُنْ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿١٤٤﴾ وَكَتَبْنَا

لَهُ فِي الْآلُوحِ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَوْعِظَةٌ وَتَفْصِيلًا لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ
فَخَذَهَا بِقُوَّةٍ وَأَمَرَ قَوْمَكَ بِأَخْذِهَا بِأَحْسَنِهَا، سَاوِرِكُمْ
كَارِ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿١٤٥﴾

And when Mūsā came at Our appointed time and his Lord spoke to him, he said, "My Lord, show (Yourself) to me that I may look at You." He said: "You shall never see Me. But look at the mount. If it stays at its place you will see Me." So when his Lord appeared to the Mount, He made it smashed, and Mūsā fell down unconscious. Then, when he recovered, he said: "Pure are You. I repent to You, and I am the first to believe." [143] He said, "O, Mūsā, I have chosen you above all men for my messages and for My speaking. So, take what I have given to you, and be among the grateful." [144]

And We wrote for him on the Tablets every thing of advice, and explanation of all things. So hold it firm and ask your people to hold on to the best things in it. I shall show you the house of the sinners. [145]

The verse 143 carries the phrase *لن تراني* "you shall never see me" The phrase has an indication that sighting of Allah is not impossible, but that he (Mūsā عليه السلام) cannot endure it with his present physical disposition. Had it been impossible, the phrase would have been *لن ارى* : "I cannot be seen" (Mazharī) This allows that sighting of Allah is a logical possibility even in this world but at the same time this verse has precluded the possibility of its occurrence in this world. This is also the unanimous view of the majority of scholars. The following *hadīth* has been included in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim:

لن يرى احد منكم ربه حتى يموت

"None among you can see his Lord unless he dies."

The second phrase, *وَلَكِنْ انْظُرْ إِلَى الْجَبَلِ* "But look at the mount" is a physical demonstration of the fact that in his present state the addressee is not capable of enduring the impact of such experience.

Thereafter, Allah actually demonstrated this fact by a flash of His appearance on the Mount of Sināi which could not stand it and was smashed into pieces.

The next phrase is "فَلَمَّا تَجَلَّىٰ رَبُّهُ لِلْجَبَلِ" So when his Lord appeared to the Mount." The Arabic word تَجَلَّىٰ "Tajallī" signifies exposure or disclosure. According to the Spiritual masters (Ṣufīs) the word signifies seeing something indirectly through some other means, like seeing certain thing reflected in the mirror. The word, therefore, cannot signify 'seeing'. It is also inferred by this very verse because this verse has negated the possibility of seeing while it has mentioned the occurrence of 'Tajallī' or appearance on the mount of Sināi.

Imām Aḥmad, Tirmidhī and Ḥakīm have reported on the authority of the Companion Anas رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited this verse and placing his thumb on the tip of his little finger said that only this much of Allah's light was exposed to the mount of Sināi which made it burst into pieces. This does not necessarily mean that the whole of the mount was not shattered, but the part of the mountain directly exposed to light might have been affected.

The Speech of Allah:

The fact that Allah spoke directly to the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام is confirmed by the Qur'an in clear terms. The first time Allah spoke with the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was when he was entrusted with Prophethood. This is the second time at the occasion of giving him the Torah that He spoke to him. The wording of the present verse indicates that this later discourse of Allah had some additional characteristics as compared to the first speech of Allah.

As to the question what was the nature and character of this discourse, cannot be ascertained by anyone but Allah. Only those logical suppositions, in this regard, can be allowed which do not go against any rule of the Shari'ah. None of such views can be accepted as being definite unless supported by some valid argument. The best practice, in this regard, is the one followed by the Companions, their disciples, and the elders who followed them. They left such matters to Allah and never tried to make ungrounded supposition to resolve them. (Bayān al-Qur'an).

The last sentence is "سَأُرِيكُمْ ذَارَ الْفَاسِقِينَ" "I will show you the abode of the sinners". This is a kind of promise by Allah that the Israelites shall soon take over Egypt or perhaps Syria, referred to as the abode of the

sinner in this verse. There are two views about the reference to the abode of the sinners. The first holds that the reference has been made to Egypt while the second takes it to refer to Syria. The difference of opinion is, in fact, based on a question whether the Israelites had returned to Egypt after the destruction of Pharaoh and his people or not. If they went back to Egypt at that time and ruled the land, as has been indicated by the verse 137 saying that Allah made the Israelites inherit the land, then, this verse definitely has referred to Syria, as the abode of the sinners. It is because, in this case, the Israelites had taken over the land of Egypt before this event of Allah's light appearing to the Mount of Sināi. In case, they did not go to Egypt after the destruction of Pharaoh, the reference may be to Egypt and Syria, both.

The phrase *وَكَتَبْنَا لَهُ فِي الْأَلْوَاحِ* "And we wrote for him everything on the Tablets" makes us understand that the Torah was given to the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام inscribed or written on the Tablets. ¹

Verses 146 - 151

سَاصْرِفْ عَنْ أَيْتِي الَّذِينَ يَتَكَبَّرُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ
وَأَنْ يَرَوْا كُلَّ آيَةٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَا وَإِنْ يَرَوْا سَبِيلَ الرُّشْدِ
لَا يَتَّخِذُوهُ سَبِيلًا وَإِنْ يَرَوْا سَبِيلَ الْغَيِّ يَتَّخِذُوهُ سَبِيلًا ذَلِكَ
بِأَنَّهُمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا عَنْهَا غَافِلِينَ ﴿١٤٦﴾ وَالَّذِينَ
كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَلِقَاءِ الْآخِرَةِ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ هَلْ يُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا
مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤٧﴾ وَاتَّخَذَ قَوْمُ مُوسَى مِنْ بَعْدِهِ مِنْ
حُلِيِّهِمْ عِجْلًا جَسَدًا لَهُ خُورٌ أَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّهُ لَا يُكَلِّمُهُمْ وَلَا
يَهْدِيهِمْ سَبِيلًا اتَّخَذُوهُ وَكَانُوا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿١٤٨﴾ وَلَمَّا سَقَطَ فِي
أَيْدِيهِمْ وَرَأَوْا أَنَّهُمْ قَدْ ضَلُّوا قَالُوا لَئِنْ لَمْ يَرْحَمْنَا رَبُّنَا

1. Another view with regard to these tablets is that these tablets were given to him prior to the revelation of the Torah and were not the part of the Torah. This has been cited by Allama Shabbir Ahmad Usmani under his comments on this verse. He has cited it from Ibn Kathir. (Translator)

وَيَغْفِرْ لَنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿١٤٩﴾ وَلَمَّا رَجَعَ مُوسَى إِلَى
 قَوْمِهِ غَضْبَانَ أَسِفًا قَالَ بِئْسَمَا خَلَفْتُمُونِي مِنْ بَعْدِي ۖ
 أَعَجِلْتُمْ أَمْرَ رَبِّكُمْ ۖ وَأَلْقَى الْأَلْوَاحَ وَأَخَذَ بِرَأْسِ أَخِيهِ يَجُرُّهُ
 إِلَيْهِ ۖ قَالَ ابْنُ أُمِّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْقَوْمُ اسْتَضَعِفُونِي وَكَادُوا يَقْتُلُونَنِي ۖ
 فَلَا تُشْمِتْ بِيَ الْأَعْدَاءَ وَلَا تَجْعَلْنِي مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ
 ﴿١٥٠﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِإِخِي وَادْخِلْنَا فِي رَحْمَتِكَ وَأَنْتَ
 أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ ﴿١٥١﴾

I shall keep away from My verses those who show arrogance on the earth unduly without truth. And even if they see every sign they do not believe in it. And if they see the Path of guidance, they do not take it as their way, and if they see the path of misguidance they do take it as their way. That is because they have belied Our signs, and have been neglectful of them. [146] And those who have belied Our signs and the meeting of the Hereafter, their deeds have gone waste. They will not be rewarded but for what they have been doing. [147] And after him the people of Mūsā made a calf from their ornaments; just a body with a moaning sound. Did they not see that it neither talked to them nor did it guide them to the path? They took to it, and were so unjust. [148] And when they became remorseful and saw that they had gone astray, they said, 'If Allah shows no mercy upon us, and forgives us not, we shall certainly be among the losers.' [149] And when Mūsā returned to his people, angry and sad, he said, "How bad is the thing you have done in my absence? How did you act in haste against the command of your Lord?" And he dropped down the Tablets and grabbed the head of his brother pulling him towards himself. He (Hārūn) said, 'O, born of my mother, the people have taken me as weak and were about to kill me, so do not let the enemies laugh at me, and do not count me with the wrong-doers.' [150] He said, 'My Lord forgive me and my brother, and admit us into Your mercy. And You are the most Merciful of all those who show mercy.' [151]

Commentary

The verse 146 spoke of the arrogant people as showing arrogance unjustly. The word without truth or unjustly indicates that assuming arrogance in response to the arrogant people is a justified act, since it is the act of arrogance in appearance, and not in reality. It is a known dictum: **الْتَكْبَرُ مَعَ الْمَكْبَرِ مَنَافَعُ تَوَاضُعُ** "Showing arrogance to the arrogant is an act of humbleness". (Masāil as-Sulūk).

The effects of Arrogance

By saying, "I shall keep away from My verses those who show arrogance," the verse implies that the people who have an offensive sense of superiority over others are deprived of knowledge and understanding. They are rendered incapable of benefitting themselves from the signs of Allah. The term 'Signs of Allah', may have a reference to the revealed verses of the Torah, Evangel and the Qur'ān, as well as to the signs inherent in all the things of the heavens and the earth. The false sense of superiority is, therefore, the worst habit which keeps man away from deliberations in the signs of Allah and getting awareness of the truth.

We find it stated in Rūh-al-Bayān that arrogance is such a wicked habitude as raises a wall between man and the knowledge from Allah. Since divine knowledge comes only through the mercy of Allah, and the mercy of Allah visits those who are humble. The spiritual leader Sheikh Rūmī has said:

هر کجا مشکل جواب آنجا رود

هر کجا پستی آب آنجا رود

"Water flows down towards the slope, and solution goes where difficulty appears."

The next verses continue to narrate the remaining part of the story. When the prophet Mūsā عليه السلام did not turn up after thirty days from the mount of Sināi where he was to be ordained by Allah after passing ten more nights on the mount, the Israelites who were a hasty and impatient people began to make fuss about it.

Among them there was a person named Sāmīrī who was a prominent man, but at the same time, had beliefs in superstitions. He said to the people that the jewels and ornaments of the Egyptians possessed by them were not permissible for them. It may be noted that

the plunder or booty taken from the enemy after their defeat was also not permissible for the Israelites. The Israelites gathered all their jewels and handed these over to him. He melted the ornaments and forged a golden calf from it. A peculiar thing reported about him is that he had collected some dust from under the hoofs of the horse of the Archangel Jibrā'il (Gabriel) at some occasion. Allah had made this dust to have the effect of some kind of life. Sāmīrī mixed this dust with the molten metal while preparing the calf. This made the calf to emit a sound like the mooing of a cow.

Having designed this satanic invention he invited the people to worship the calf and said that it was god. He said that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام had gone to speak with God to the mount of Sināī while god had come to them in the form of this calf. Sāmīrī already enjoyed a place of respect among them, this unusual demonstration increased their trust in him and they started worshipping the calf, and took it as their god. The verse 148 has given a short description of this event while another verse of the Holy Qur'ān has described it in detail.

The verse 149 speaks of their remorse on this guilt and their repentance, while the verse 150 describes the events followed by the arrival of the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام from the mount of Sināī. It described that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was extremely angry when he saw his people in this state of ignorance. It is reported that Allah had informed him of their perversion on the mount of Sināī. Now seeing them in this state with his own eyes filled him with indignation. First, he turned to his people and said: *يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرْتُمْ اَنْتُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِيْ* "How bad is the thing you have done in my absence". *اَعَجَلْتُمْ اَمْرَ رَبِّكُمْ* "How did you act in haste against the command of your Lord?" That is, you must have waited until the book of Allah came to you. Some of the commentators have said that it meant that they hastily decided that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was dead. Then he turned to the Prophet Harūn عليه السلام whom he has left among them as his deputy. He wanted to free his hand in order to grab him. He quickly put down the tablets of the Torah and grabbed the head of his brother. This has been termed as having dropped. The Arabic word used here is: *اَلْقَا* *Ilqā'* which signifies dropping or throwing. This gives rise to a doubt that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام showed disrespect to the tablets of the Torah by throwing or

dropping them down. It is obvious that throwing the tablets of the Torah was great sin, and equally obvious is the fact that all the Prophets are innocent and free of all sins. The implication of the verse, therefore, is that he put away the Tablets as quickly in order to free his hands, as seemed like having been dropped. The Holy Qur'an has described it by using this word as a gesture of warning. (Bayān al-Qur'an)

Thereafter he turned to the Prophet Hārūn عليه السلام and grasped the hair of his head. The Prophet Hārūn then gave him the true account of the events and said that it was not his fault, for he stopped them from this wicked act but they did not listen to him. They were so obstinate about it that they were about to kill him. He said that he should not count him among the ignorant people and should not let his enemies laugh at him by treating him in that way. This made the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام cool down. At this occasion, he prayed to Allah, saying, "رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِإِخِي وَأَدْخِلْنَا فِي رَحْمَتِكَ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ" "My Lord, forgive me and my brother, and admit us to Your mercy, and You are the most merciful of all those who show mercy." He asked forgiveness for his brother for any of his shortcoming with regard to his duties. He asked forgiveness for himself either for his putting away the tablets of the Torah in a hurry which the Holy Qur'an had described as having been 'dropped' to make a gesture of warning, or perhaps, for educating people that they should include themselves while asking forgiveness for others to preclude the sense of complacency on their part.

Verses 152 - 156

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا الْعِجْلَ سَيَنَالُهُمْ غَضَبٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَذَلَّةٌ فِي
الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُفْتَرِينَ ﴿١٥٢﴾ وَالَّذِينَ عَمِلُوا
السَّيِّئَاتِ ثُمَّ تَابُوا مِن بَعْدِهَا وَأَمْسُوا أَنزَلْنَا رَحْمَةً مِّن بَعْدِهَا
لَنَغْفِرَ رَجِيمٌ ﴿١٥٣﴾ وَلَمَّا سَكَتَ عَن مُّوسَى الْغَضَبُ أَخَذَ
الْأَلْوَاحَ وَفِي نُسْخَتِهَا هُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَرْبَابِهِمْ يَرْهَبُونَ
﴿١٥٤﴾ وَاخْتَارَ مُوسَى قَوْمَهُ سَبْعِينَ رَجُلًا رِّمَقَاتِنَا فَلَمَّا
أَخَذْتَهُمُ الرِّجْفَةُ قَالَ رَبِّ لَوْ شِئْتَ أَهْلَكْتَهُم مِّن قَبْلُ وَإِيَّايَ ۖ

أَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ السُّفَهَاءُ مِنَّا إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا فِتْنَتُكَ ۖ تُضِلُّ بِهَا
 مَن تَشَاءُ وَتَهْدِي مَن تَشَاءُ ۚ أَنْتَ وَلِيُّنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا
 وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْغَافِرِينَ ﴿١٥٥﴾ وَكُتِبَ لَنَا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ
 وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ إِنَّا هَذَا إِلَيْكَ ۖ قَالَ عَذَابِي أُصِيبُ بِهِ مَن أَشَاءُ ۚ
 وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَسَاكُنْ بِهَا لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ وَيُؤْتُونَ
 الزَّكَاةَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِنَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٥٦﴾

Surely, those who have taken the calf (as god) upon them shall befall the wrath of Allah, and humiliation in the worldly life. And that is, how we recompense the fabricators. [152] And those who have done evil deeds, then have repented thereafter, and have believed - surely after that your Lord is most Forgiving, very Merciful. [153] And when the fury of Mūsā quieted down, he picked up the Tablets, and in its contents there was guidance, and mercy for those who are fearful before their Lord. [154] And Mūsā selected seventy men from his people for Our appointment. Later when the earthquake seized them, he said, "My Lord, had it been Your will, You could have destroyed them earlier, and me too. Would You destroy us for what the foolish among them have done? It is nothing but a trial from You, wherewith you let go astray whom You will, and give guidance to whom You will. You are our protector, so forgive us, and have mercy on us and You are the best among those who forgive. [155] And write for us good in this world and in the Hereafter. We turn to You in repentance." He said, "As for My punishment, I afflict with it whom I will. And My mercy extends to everything. So, I shall write it for those who fear, and pay Zakāh, and those who do believe in Our verses. [156]

The first verse (152) has warned those who took to the worship of the calf and persisted in it, of their sad fate in the Hereafter, and of disgraceful life in this world.

The worldly life is also affected by the sinful deeds

A part of punishment of some sins is also given in this life. This is

what happened to Sāmīrī. The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام commanded him to live apart from the people not touching any one with his hand nor is he touched by any one of the people. Consequently for the rest of his life he lived a deserted life of seclusion, walking about with animals. No human did come near him.

Al-Qurtubī has reported on the authority of the Companion Qatādah that his punishment from Allah was that whenever he touched someone or was touched by anyone of the people both suffered from fever. The author of Rūḥ al-Bayān has observed that the symptoms of this disease are still inherited by his generations. This verse has ended with this sentence. *وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُفْتَرِينَ* "And this is how we recompence the fabricators." The Sheikh Sufyan ibn 'Uyainah has said that those who invent new things in the Shari'ah (take to Bid'ah) also commit the sin of fabrication and deserve such punishment. (Mazharī)

Imām Mālik has also inferred from this verse that those who invent new practices in the Shari'ah deserve the same punishment of Allah's wrath in the Hereafter and disgrace in this life. (Qurtubī)

The verse 153 speaks of the people who repented to Allah for their sin after the admonitions of their Prophet, and fulfilled the formidable condition of killing each other for their forgiveness. They killed each other as was stipulated in the command of Allah for their forgiveness by Allah. The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام called them to him and informed them that Allah had accepted their repentance. The people killed in this combat were awarded martyrdom while those who survived were forgiven by Allah. This implies that those who get themselves involved in sinful acts, if repent to Allah and correct their belief, Allah forgives them in His mercy with no regard to the gravity of the act. It is, therefore wise to turn to Allah in repentance instantly after every sinful act.'

The verse 154 describes that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام lifted up the tablets of the Torah which contained guidance and blessing for those who feared Allah. The Arabic word: *نُسْخَة* 'Nuskha' rendered as contents signifies a writing copied from a book or other writings. There are certain reports that inform us that the tablets had broken at the time the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام had put them away quickly. This time Allah gave him the Torah written on some other material.

Seventy people and their Death

The verse 155 describes an unusual event. After the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام brought the Torah for his people and bade them to follow it, they, being a crooked and pretentious people, said that they were not sure of it's being the word of Allah, and that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام might have written it himself. He prayed to Allah for making them certain about it. Allah said to Mūsā عليه السلام that he should choose seventy men out of his people and bring them to the mount of Sinai, He shall make them hear the word of Allah which was done as was promised. But they said that they were not certain of the voice heard by them as being the voice of God - 'We shall believe only when we see Allah vividly.' Since this demand was based on ignorance and obstinacy, they evoked the wrath of Allah. They were caught by the earthquake from beneath and by a thunder clap from above. Instantly they fell down on the ground as senseless as dead.

The word used in Sūrah Al-Baqarah while describing this event is (صَاعِقَةً) which signifies thunder, while in this verse the word (رَجْفَةً) has been used which denotes earthquake. The two words can be reconciled by assuming that they were punished by both the thunder and the earthquake. In short, they looked like dead, or perhaps they were really dead. The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was extremely aggrieved by this incident. Firstly, because they were all prominent personalities of the Israelites, secondly, he did not know how he would face his people on his return. They would blame him with the murder of all these people, and would even kill him. The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام said to Allah, 'O, my Lord, I know that it is not your will to kill them, as they could be killed at earlier occasions more suited to their destruction. They could be drowned with Pharaoh, or killed at the time of calf-worship, but you did not do so. I am sure that You do not want them dead, but You aim at giving them warning in this way. Besides, You cannot kill all of us for the bad deeds done by some foolish people.' He also said, "O my Lord, I know this is just a trial from You. You let some people go astray with Your test and give guidance to some others who perceive the wisdom and lesson inherent in them. I am also among those who know that You are The Wise and All-Knowing. You are the Most Merciful of all and the Most-forgiving. O my Lord, forgive the insolence shown by these people." As a result of his prayer, all the

seventy men were raised to life.

The verse 156 contains the last portion of the prayer. It said: **وَكَتَبْ لَنَا** "And write for us good in this world and in the Hereafter. We turn to you in repentance." Allah Almighty answered in response to this request:

عَذَابِي أُصِيبُ بِهِ مَنْ أَشَاءُ وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَسَاكْتُبُهَا لِلَّذِينَ
يَتَّقُونَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِنَا يُؤْمِنُونَ .

"As for My punishment, I afflict with it whom I will. And My Mercy extends to everything. So I shall write it for those who fear, and pay Zakāh and those who do believe in Our verses".

That is, though all the disobedient deserve the punishment of Allah but out of His mercy, which encircles everything, even the wrath of Allah, He afflicts with His punishment only a few whom He wills. His mercy is as great as includes everything, even those who rebel Allah and deny Him are shown some of His mercy, though it is limited to this world alone. When His mercy is so covering that it includes even the disobedient, He will surely write it for those who deserve it by fearing Allah, paying Zakāh and by believing in His verses. Then the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was given the good news of its acceptance.

The Commentators have varied opinion about the above interpretation of this prayer. This verse has no indication of the acceptance of his prayer in clear words as in other cases the approval of his prayers has been clearly mentioned. For example, the approval of his prayer has been mentioned in these words at another occasion (20:36): **فَقَدْ أُذِنَتْ** "O Mūsā you are given what you asked for." It is mentioned in another verse (10:89) **أُجِيبَتْ دَعْوَانِي** (O! Mūsā and Hārūn) your prayer has been accepted." At this occasion (7:156), no mention of such approval has been made. Some commentators have, therefore, suggested that this prayer of the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was not accepted in favour of the Israelites, rather, it was accepted in favour of the Muslim Ummah. The author of Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī has, however, said it to be a remote possibility.

The correct interpretation, therefore, is that the Prayer of the Prophet Mūsā was comprised of two requests. The first, was of mercy and forgiveness for those who were punished, and second for writing the good for him and his people both in this world and in the Hereafter. The acceptance of the first request is mentioned in this verse while the answer to the second request has been mentioned in the next verse (157). In response to his first request he was told that Allah does not punish every one who acts sinfully. He punishes only a few whom He will for their transgression. Therefore these people also shall not be punished. His Mercy is as great as covers every creation of Allah. Even those who are punished are not completely deprived of His mercy, since they could get harder punishment than they got. Allah has all the powers to do everything He wills.

The Satan claimed that according to this verse he was also the subject of His mercy because His mercy is said to be extending to everything and he was one of 'everything.'

My teacher, the Sheikh Anwar Kāshmirī has said that this verse has indicated that His mercy *can* encircle every thing. It did not say that His mercy *shall* encircle everything. In another verse of the Holy Qur'an it has been said in more clear words:

فَإِنْ كَذَّبُوكَ فَقُلْ رَّبُّكُمْ ذُو رَحْمَةٍ وَاسِعَةٍ وَلَا يُرَدُّ بَأْسُهُ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ

"If they disbelieve in you say: 'Your Lord has all-encompassing mercy; but His punishment cannot be warded off from the evil-doers-6:147."

This has made it clear that vastness of His mercy does not preclude the sinners from being punished by Him.

In short, the first part of the invocation of the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام in favour of these people for mercy and forgiveness was instantly granted, but the second part asking for writing the perfect favour of Allah both in this world and in the Hereafter was stipulated with certain conditions. That is, as far as this world is concerned Allah can make His mercy common to all without regard to their belief or disbelief, but the Hereafter is a distinct world where His Mercy shall be limited only to those who fulfil certain conditions. Firstly, those who

fear Allah and take to piety that is, they fulfil all their religious obligations and avoid things forbidden by Allah, and pay Zakāh regularly out of their earnings, and thirdly, those who, firmly believe in His verses without offering any pretences or false interpretations to them. If these people too, fulfil the above conditions, the perfect favour shall be written for them both in this world and in the Hereafter.

The next verse, however, has indicated that people who shall perfectly fit the above description will be those coming after them in the last age, and follow the last Prophet, consequently deserving the perfect Mercy or favour of Allah. According to the report of Qatādah cited above, the Satan claimed that he also deserved the Mercy of Allah, for His Mercy extends to everything but the condition of 'Īmān (belief) etc. specified in the verse excluded him. Similarly, the Jews and the Christians claimed that they too believed in Allah and paid Zakah, therefore, they shall also get the perfect Mercy of Allah in both the worlds. The next verse, however, included the condition of belief in the last Prophet ﷺ and in the verses of the Qur'ān. This has excluded the Jews and the Christians who did not believe in the Holy Prophet

ﷺ

Verse 157

الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْتُوبًا
عِنْدَهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ يَأْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَاهُمْ عَنِ
الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبَائِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ
إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِهِ
وَعَزَّزُوهُ وَنَصَرُوهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّورَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ مَعَهُ ۙ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ
الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

Those who follow the Messenger, the *Ummī* (unlettered) prophet whom they find written with them in the Torah and the Injil (The gospels), and who bids them the Fair and forbids the Unfair, and makes pure things permissible for them and makes impure things prohib-

ited to them, and relieves them of their burden, and of the shackles that were upon them. So, those who believe in him and strengthen him, and help him and follow the light sent down with him, those are the ones who are successful." [157]

The Distinct virtues of the Muslim Ummah

This verse speaks of the people who, in actual sense, deserve the perfect Mercy and complete favour of Allah asked by the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام for his people. It said that the people fulfilling the conditions, referred to in the previous verse, in real sense are those who follow the unlettered Messenger of Allah. The verse, while speaking of these people, described certain distinctive qualities of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then the verse enjoined not only belief in him but also following the commands and practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This makes us understand that in conjunction with belief in Allah, practicing the Sunnah (the practices) and the Shari'ah (The Law) of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is imperative for eternal success in the Hereafter.

The phrase الرَّسُولُ النَّبِيُّ الْأُمِّيُّ "The Messenger, the unlettered prophet", has mentioned three qualities of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The Arabic word: أُمِّيٌّ 'Ummī' rendered as unlettered signifies a person who does not know the art of reading and writing. The Holy Qur'ān has referred to the Arabs as: أُمِّيَّةٌ 'Ummiyyīn' because the Arabs generally had very little to do with reading and writing. Being incapable of reading and writing is, obviously not a quality, rather it is an indication of imperfection. No matter how unusual it may seem, the same sign of imperfection has come to serve the Holy Prophet ﷺ as a sign of his perfection of the highest degree, taking in view the unparalleled erudition and exemplary wisdom and learning preached and demonstrated by him.

A demonstration of perfect wisdom, showing wise practices and behaviour by a man of letters is considered to be a fruit of his education, but when these and many other attributes of perfections of the highest humanly imaginable degree come out of a personality, who did not even know how to read and write, makes it as bright a miracle as daylight. It is more surprising when we see him living in Makkah (Mecca) for forty years without ever having any opportunity to learn. Exactly when he is forty years of age, suddenly he starts speaking things of such great wisdom and, in such a linguistic style and diction

that none in the world could produce a match of even the smallest part of this word - the Qur'ān.¹ This is, indeed, a self-evident witness affirming that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was the true Messenger of Allah and Qur'ān, the true word of Allah. The quality of being unlettered, therefore, may be a defect for others but for the Holy Prophet ﷺ it is a commendable attribute.²

The fourth quality of the Holy Prophet ﷺ mentioned in this verse is that they shall find him written in the Torah and the Injīl (Evangel). It may be noted that the verse did not say that they will find his attributes or indications written in the Books. It said that they will find him written in their revelations. It is an implicit indication that the attributes and qualities of the Holy Prophet ﷺ mentioned in the Torah or the Injīl shall be so expressive and with as clear details as seeing them will be similar to seeing the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. The mention of the Torah and the Injīl, without a reference to the Zabūr (The Book revealed to the Prophet Dāwūd [David]) is because the Christians and the Jews believed in them, otherwise Zabūr also contained the description of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ in the early Books

The Present versions of the Torah and the Injīl, having undergone great changes and distortions have lost their essential quality of being original and trustworthy. Despite this fact, they still contain expressions bearing reference to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Besides, it is obvious that the Holy Qur'ān had declared, in definite terms, that the Torah and Injīl contained the descriptions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The Jews and the Christians living in the period of the Holy Prophet would have used this Qur'anic claim against the Prophet ﷺ and the Muslims, in case this claim could be proved as not corresponding to reality. We find that neither did the Jews nor the Christians ever try to refute this

1. The author here, refers to a verse of the Holy Qur'ān (2:23) throwing a challenge to the whole world to produce a sūrah (chapter) comparable to any of the Qur'anic Sūrahs. Inability in meeting this challenge by the Arabs who were as boastful of their oratory as to call the whole mankind excepting themselves, the Ajam signifying a dumb person is certainly a clear evidence of the miraculous character of the Holy Qur'ān. (Translator)]

2. The verse under discussion has mentioned this attribute along with as great attributes as Messenger and Prophet. This Qur'anic witness is enough to show that his being unlettered was equally a great attribute of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. (Translator)]

claim, which is a witness of the truth that the Torah and the Injīl current in that period contained transparent references to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Otherwise, the Jews and the Christians would have used it as against this Qur'anic claim.

It may be noted that some of the attributes and qualities of the Holy Prophet ﷺ mentioned in these books have been reported in the Holy Qur'an with reference to the Torah and the Injīl, while some other attributes have been reported in the Holy Traditions (*Hadīth*) by those new Muslims who read them in these book themselves, and later they had converted to Islām after reading such descriptions.

Al-Baihaqī has reported the following event in Dalā'il-al-Nubuwwah. The Companion Anas رضى الله عنه has reported that a boy from the Jews was in the service of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Once he was sick, the Holy Prophet ﷺ went to his house where he saw the father of the lad reciting some parts of the Torah beside his bed. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said to the father, "I bid you to tell me by the pledge of Allah if you find descriptions in the Torah indicating my coming as a prophet and referring to my attributes?" He negated it. The son instantly said "O Prophet of Allah, my father is wrong. We find you and your attributes mentioned in the Torah. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that you are the Messenger of Allah." The Holy Prophet ﷺ bade his Companions that they should perform his funeral ceremonies, after his death, according to Islām because he was a Muslim, after this witness. (Maḥzarī)

Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه has reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ owed some money to a Jew. He demanded the Prophet to pay him the money back and said to him in a harsh tone that he will not let him go until he gets his money back. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said to him that the Jew had a right on him, and sat down by him saying that he will not go until he lets him go willingly. The Holy Prophet ﷺ remained there for the whole day and night. He offered the Ḥuḥr, 'Aṣr, Maḡhrib and 'Ishā', and Fajr of the next day (from mid day to the next morning). The Companions were greatly annoyed at this behaviour from the Jew. They were secretly admonishing the Jew so that he may let the Prophet go. The Holy Prophet ﷺ having some idea asked them of what they were doing. They said that it was unbearable for them to see the

Prophet in the custody of a Jew. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said to them, "My Lord has prohibited me from doing wrong to any one under the covenant."

Next morning, the Jew who was highly impressed by this remarkable experience, came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and declared:

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّكَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

"I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and I bear witness that you are the Messenger of Allah."

Subsequent to this declaration of his faith in Allah he said that by detaining the Prophet ﷺ he meant nothing but to test the truth of his attributes mentioned in the Torah. He said that he had read the following description concerning him in the Torah. He also declared to give away half of his wealth in the way of Allah. The description given by him is this:

"Muḥammad, the son of 'Abdullāh. He shall be born in Makkah. The place of his migration shall be Madīnah. His country will be Syria. He shall neither be a man of harsh temperament, nor shall he speak roughly. He shall not make noise in bazars. He shall be away from the acts of immodesty."

He said that he found out the truth of this description in him. He was a wealthy person, and half of his wealth was a considerable amount for the Muslims. (The above incident has been reported by Maḏharī with reference to Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah by Baihaqī)

Imām al-Baghawī has reported on the authority of Ka'ab Aḥḃār that the Torah contained the following description with regard to the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

"Muḥammad is the Messenger and chosen servant of Allah. He is neither a man of harsh temperament nor is he a man of disagreeable speech. He does not cry in bazars, nor does he return ill when ill is done to him. He forgives or ignores the wrong-doers."

"His birth place is Makkah and his migration shall be to Ṭaybah (Madīnah). His country is Syria and his people shall be ḥammādīn. That is they shall praise Allah when in comfort and when in trouble. They shall say Takbīr when ascending in

their travel. They shall watch the shadows in order to ascertain proper time of their prayers."

"He shall wear a sheet of cloth round his waist and keep his hands and feet clean with ablution (Wuḍū). His man calling for prayer shall raise his voice in the air. In battle fields they shall line up as closely as in prayers. At nights their recitations shall be heard like humming of the bees."

Ibn 'Asākir and Ibn Sa'd have cited full chain of narrators saying that Sahl Maulā Khuthaimah has informed that he had read the following description concerning the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the Injīl (Evangel):

"He shall neither be short nor shall he be tall. Colour shall be fair, hair, in two locks. He shall bear a seal of prophethood on his body between shoulders. He shall not accept alms, shall ride on camel and by himself shall he milk the goat, and wear the patched clothes."

"He shall be in the line of Isma'īl. His name shall be Aḥmad:

Ibn Sa'd in his book 'Tabaqāt', Dārimī in his Musnad and Baihaqī in his book Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Salām, who was a great scholar of the Jews. He said that Torah had contained the following description with regard to the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

"O Prophet, We have sent you as a witness over all the nations of the world, as the bearer of good tidings to the righteous, as a warner to the wrong doers and as Protector of the Ummyyīn' the unlettered Arabs. You are My Messenger and servant. I have named you, 'Mutawakkil' (One who trusts Allah). You are neither a man of harsh temperament, nor quarrelling, nor crying in the markets. You do not return evil in response to evil, rather forgive or ignore the wrong-doers. Allah shall not let him die until he sets the crooked right and make them believe in Allah exclusively, until he makes the blind eyes see, dumb ears hear and sealed hearts open."

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī also contains a similar description on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ رضى الله عنه. Besides, al-Baihaqī has reported the following statement in Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah, on the authority of Wahb ibn Munabbih, the great scholar and expert in the

early books.

"Allah revealed to the Prophet Dāwūd (David) in the Zabūr as follows: 'O, Dāwūd, there shall come a Prophet after you. His name shall be Aḥmad. I shall never be displeased with him, nor he shall ever be disobedient to me. I have forgiven all of his errors and omissions. I have enjoined upon his people, the optional as well as the obligatory prayers that I had enjoined upon the early Prophets. On the day of judgement they shall come before me having the light similar to the light of the early prophets. O Dāwūd, I have blessed Muḥammad and his people with excellence over the people of other prophets. I have favoured them with six special concessions which I did not concede to the early people. They shall not be punished for their inadvertent omissions. I shall forgive their unintentional sins if they seek My forgiveness. The money they shall spend willingly in My way, I shall give them manifold in return in this world also."

Those who shall say *إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ* "We belong to Allah, and to Him we are to return," when ever they are faced with some distress, I shall turn their distress into blessing and mercy and a means of his guidance to paradise. I shall accede to their invocations, sometimes, by giving them what they asked for, and sometimes, by storing their prayers to be granted on the Day of Judgement." (Rūḥ-al-Ma'ānī)

The above are only a few out of hundreds of such Traditions which have been collected by the religious scholars in separate volumes, among them is Sheikh Raḥmat Allah Kairānvī of India who has dealt with this subject thoroughly in his book 'Iẓhār al-Ḥaqq'. He has given specific examples of such descriptions found in the current versions of the Bible, despite the fact that they have been robbed of their originality through innumerable changes and distortions by the Judo-Christian theologians. The Urdu version of this remarkable work has been published in Pakistan. ¹

Some additional attributes of the Holy Prophet ﷺ have also been

1. By the grace of Allah, I have the honour of rendering this work into English. Three volumes of the English version have been published in London. (Translator)

included in the descriptions found in the Torah and the Injīl, among them is his attribute of bidding good to people and preventing them from evil. **أَمَرَ بِالْعُرْفِ وَنَهَى عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ** . The Arabic term Ma'aruf literally signifies something recognized, acknowledged or known, while the term: **مُنْكَرٌ** 'munkar' signifies strange, or unrecognized. That is, Ma'aruf refers to the acts which are known and recognized in Islām while Munkar refers to the acts which are not recognized or known. This has indicated that the act which was recognized by, or known to, the people of the first century of Islām shall only be considered as good-deed otherwise it shall be termed as 'munkar' or rejected. This, in turn, makes us understand that any act, not approved by the Companions and their disciples (صحابه و تابعين) cannot be considered as good-deed with no regard to how positive or agreeable it looks. The authentic Traditions have, therefore, termed the acts not acknowledged or approved by the Companions and their disciples as innovated acts (مُخْتَلَعَاتُ الْأُمُور) or 'bid'ah' (innovation). In the next phrase of the verse the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been described as having the attribute of inviting people to good and preventing them from evil. The verse (7:157) said: **يَأْمُرُهُم بِالْعُرْفِ وَيَنْهَاهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ** "Who bids them the Fair and forbids the Unfair."

This attribute has been, a common attribute of all the Prophets, as it had to be, because the very purpose of their being ordained by Allah is to guide people to good and prevent them from evil. There must be some reason in describing this attribute as a distinct feature of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . A little reflection on his effective way of preaching, and speaking to people according to their state of mind is enough to show the distinction. The Arab bedouins who knew nothing except grazing the camels and goats were spoken to in such a simple and candid terms that made them understand effortlessly even complex and speculative ideas. He used to receive delegates from the world-powers of the time like Rome and Persia and from other tribes. They were greatly impressed by his ingenuous approach in making his point easily intelligible to them. His god-gifted capability of making impact on others by his speech was miraculously unusual and has been acknowledged even by his enemies. Another attribute described in the Torah was that through the Holy Prophet ﷺ , Allah shall make the blind eyes see and dumb ears hear, and the sealed hearts open. This may also have a reference to his effective method of preaching and

making things understood easily.

The verse under discussion has described second attribute that he shall permit his people to eat pure things and shall prohibited impure things. This implies that many things which, in fact were pure and good, and had been forbidden for the Israelites as a punishment shall be permitted by the Holy Prophet ﷺ for his people. For example, the fat of permissible animals were forbidden for the Israelites as a punishment against their sinful deeds.

For example, the fat of the properly slaughtered animal which was forbidden for them was made permissible by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم for the Muslims. The example of impure things includes blood, dead animals, liquor and all the prohibited animals. This also includes impermissible means of income like gambling, interest and bribes etc. (Al-Sirāj al-Munīr). Some scholars have included immorality and ill manners also in impure things.

Next the verse speaks of the third attribute of the Holy Prophet ﷺ saying "وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ" And relieves them of their burden and of the shackles that were upon them.

The Arabic word '*Iṣr*' اِصْر signifies heavy burden enough to stop movement, and the word '*Aghlāl*' اَغْلَال is a plural of '*ghull*' (غل) signifying handcuffs or shackle which binds the hands of a criminal with his neck. Both the words refer to punishment and were not, in themselves, a religious requirement. For example, the Israelites were essentially required to cut away the piece of cloth having impurity on it. They were not allowed simply to wash it away. Similarly the spoils of war acquired during *jihād* with infidels was not permissible for them. Reportedly, a heavenly fire used to come and burn it up. They were not allowed hunting on *Sabbath* (Saturday). The human organs involved in committing sin were required to be cut off. The murderer had to be essentially killed in retaliation with no regard to the nature of murder: deliberate or homicide by mistake. They had no legal concession of paying ransom.

The arduous injunctions described above have been regarded to in this verse by the words burden and shackles. It is said that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم shall abrogate such injunctions and replace them

with easily practicable commandments. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has referred to this aspect of Islamic Shari'ah in a Ḥadīth saying 'that he is leaving among them an easy and practicable law which is neither cumbersome nor susceptible to going astray'. In another tradition he said: *اَلْدِّينُ يُسْرُ*: "Dīn (Islam) is easy".

Subsequent to the description of some attributes of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم the verse has said:

فَاَلَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوْا بِهٖ وَعَزَّوْهُ وَنَصَرُوْهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّوْرَ الَّذِىْ اُنْزِلَ مَعَهٗ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ
الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ

"So, those who believe in him, and hold him in reverence, and help him, and follow the light sent down with him, those are the ones who are successful."

This verse has stipulated the achievement of success with four conditions namely, belief in the Holy Prophet ﷺ, having reverence for him, readily coming to his help and following the commandments of the Holy Qur'an.

The word used for reverence in this verse is *عَزَّوْهُ* which is derived from 'Ta'zīr'. Lexically it means 'to stop someone, with love and affection, from doing something, and to guard him. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh bin 'Abbās رضى الله عنه has interpreted it as 'reverence. Al-mubarrad has commented that it denotes the highest degree of reverence. The implication of the verse is that the achievement of everlasting success is the destiny of those who, in addition to having love and respect for him, are always ready to help him against his enemies. In the life of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم helping him was directly related to his person; but after his departure helping his message or supporting the Islamic Shari'ah is analogous to helping the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The Holy Qur'an has been referred to with the word 'light'. Since light does not require an external proof for its existence, similarly the Qur'an, in itself, is a clear proof of its being divine and the word of Allah, since the highest degree of wisdom and eloquence that it contains is as evident as the sunlight which requires no proof for its existence. Specially so when it was spoken by an unlettered man. Similar to light which is not only bright in itself, but has the characteristics of making the darks bright as well, the Holy Qur'an has

enlightened the mankind which was lost in darkness.

The significance of the Sunnah:

The verse under discussion started with the words, "Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet," and has ended on the phrase. "and follow the light sent down with him". The first phrase enjoins the obedience of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم while the second phrase bids to the obedience to the Qur'anic injunctions. This has indicated that eternal salvation is dependent on the obedience of both, the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*, and that the obedience of the Holy Prophet can be achieved only by following the way of his life - the *Sunnah*.

Love and respect of the Prophet is essential

The phrase عَزَّوَجَلَّ وَتَصَرَّفْهُ "And hold him in reverence and help him." has been placed between the above two sentences, implying that the obedience required for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is not like the obedience one has to show to the high ranking official out of some necessity. This has to be the obedience in true sense of the word which is a product of love and respect. That is to say, one should bear as much love and reverence for him as to make this obedience dearest to him. People have varied relations with their Prophet. He is a Prophet, a master, a commander and an object of great love at the same time. Besides, the Prophet being superior to all his people in respect of knowledge, wisdom, and social and moral behaviour demands, deep respect or veneration on the part of his people.

Our Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم has perfection in each of the above aspects making it essential for the Muslims to fulfil the demands of all his positions. He should be believed as a prophet, obeyed as a commander, venerated as a man of great knowledge and wisdom and deeply loved and cherished for being very kind to them.

The obedience of the Prophet has to be a religious requirement for the Muslims because the very purpose of his being sent down remains unfulfilled without it. In the case of the Holy Prophet ﷺ Allah Almighty has enjoined additional obligations upon the Muslims. In another verse of the Holy Qur'ān we find the phrase: وَتَعَزَّوْهُ وَتَقَرَّبْوْهُ "So that you assist him and honour him." (48:9) Yet in another verse people have been warned that they should not raise their voices above the

voice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . The verse said:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَرْفَعُوا أَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ

"O Believers! do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet." (49:2)

In another verse the Muslims have been advised in these words.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْدَمُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ

"O believers, do not go ahead in the presence of Allah and His Messenger. (49:1)

The verse has warned the Muslims that they should not start their speech before the speech of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in his presence. The Companion Sahl ibn 'Abdullāh رضى الله عنه has taken it to imply that people should not start talking before the Prophet of Allah speaks, and should remain silent when he talks. Another verse of the Holy Qur'an has prohibited the Muslims from calling the Messenger of Allah in a manner they call each other. It said:

لَا تَجْعَلُوا دُعَاءَ الرَّسُولِ بَيْنَكُمْ كَدُعَاءِ بَعْضِكُمْ بَعْضًا

"Do not make the calling of the Messenger, among yourself, like the calling of one another." (24:63)

The Holy Qur'an warned the Muslims that all their good deeds shall go waste if they show lack of respect to him.

The companions, who availed the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ most of their time, maintained the respect of the Holy Prophet according to Qur'ānic instructions. It has been reported that Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه , after the revelation of the above verse, used to speak with the Messenger of Allah as stealthily as saying some secret to him. Same was the case with Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Farūq رضى الله عنه .

The companion 'Amr ibn 'Āṣ رضى الله عنه has said:

"None on earth is as dear to me as was the Messenger of Allah but at the same time I was unable to cast my looks at him. If I am ever asked to describe him, I find it difficult since I have never seen him enough as to give out his description."

Tirmidhi has reported Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه saying that whenever the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came in the assembly of the

companions, people kept their eyes down with respect. Only Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and 'Umar رضى الله عنهما raised their eyes and used to smile at them.

'Urwah ibn Mas'ūd was once sent to Madīnah for spying on the Muslims. On his return to Makkah he reported, "I have seen the courts of great kings like the king of Rome and Persia and I have met King Negus but the respect and veneration I saw in the hearts of the Muslims for their prophet was unique, never seen anywhere in the world. I think you shall never succeed against them."

The Companion Mughīrah ibn Shu'bah رضى الله عنه has reported in a Tradition that the companions of the Prophet of Allah deemed it against his respect to call him from outside his house. They knocked at his door with their finger nails to avoid making a loud sound. Even after his departure the companions did not only avoid talking loudly in his mosque, they also avoided raising their voice while giving sermons in the mosque. A number of people could not help themselves from weeping when some one made a mention of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

This exemplary love and respect of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم let them share a considerable part of prophetic perfection and enjoy the highest religious status next to the prophets.

Verses 158 - 159

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا الَّذِي لَهُ
مُلْكُ السَّمُوتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ فَآمِنُوا
بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ النَّبِيِّ الْأُمِّيِّ الَّذِي يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَكَلِمَتِهِ
وَاتَّبِعُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾ وَمِنْ قَوْمٍ مُوسَى أُمَّةٌ يَهْدُونَ
بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهِ يَعْدِلُونَ ﴿١٥٩﴾

Say, "O people, I am a messenger of Allah (sent) to you from the One to whom belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. There is no god but He. He gives life and brings death. So, believe in Allah and His Messenger, the Ummi (unlettered) prophet, who believes in Allah and in His words and follow him so that you may get the right path." [158] And among the

community of Mūsā there are people who guide with truth and do justice thereby. [159]

This verse speaks of one of the basic aspects of the prophethood which is among the fundamental tenets of Islam. That is, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been sent as His Messenger to the entire mankind and to the jinn (genies) coming into being upto the day of judgment.

This verse has commanded the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to make general declaration that he has been sent to all the people of the world, and that his prophethood was not limited to a particular people and place as was the case with the early prophets who came to a particular people and place and for a limited period of time.

He is the last of all Prophets

The fact that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been sent down at the end of all prophets is an obvious reason behind the Islamic belief of Finality of prophethood. His being the last of all prophets and coming down for the guidance of all people of all future times leaves no room for any other Prophet. The same fact provides with an explanation to a characteristic quality of the Muslim Ummah. According to a Tradition of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, there shall always be a group among the Muslims who will keep defying the anti-Islamic forces and putting resistance in the way of sacrilegious thought and practice. It will also correct false interpretations of the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*. This group shall be favoured by Allah with His special help and thereby will, ultimately, win over the opposite forces. It is because these people are considered to be the real inheritors of the prophetic mission, faithfully discharging their duty after the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Imām al-Rāzī, under the comments of the Qur'ānic commandment كُنُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ (Be in the company of the truthful) has remarked that this phrase has provided an assurance that a group of the truthful shall always be available for people, otherwise the command of seeking their company made no sense. Imām Rāzī has inferred the principle of consensus (اجماع) from this phrase. That is, the presence of the truthful people was enough to preclude the agreement of the Muslim *Ummah* on error.

Ibn Kathīr has inferred from this verse that it has provided a proof

that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was the seal of the prophets because his message was for all the people of the world and for all the ages to come. According to some authentic Traditions, the Prophet 'Isā عليه السلام will also follow the Law of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم after his descent from heavens in the last age. Apart from this verse there are many other verses which speak in unmistakable terms of the Finality of Prophethood. For example the Holy Qur'an said:

وَأُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ لِأُنْذِرَكُمْ بِهِ وَمَنْ بَلَغَ (الانعام - ١٩)

"And this Qur'an has been revealed to me that I may warn you thereby, and whomsoever it may reach." (6:19)

This, evidently, enjoins the following of the Holy Qur'an upon all the people coming after the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and to acquire knowledge of the Qur'an.

Some distinctions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

Ibn Kathīr has cited the Musnad of Imām Aḥmad reporting by authentic narrators that at the occasion of the battle of Tabūk, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was engaged in the late night prayer (Tahajjud). The companions gathered around him in a circle to save him from any possible attack by the enemy. After completing the prayer the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "This night I have been awarded with five distinctions, not awarded to any prophet before. Firstly, my prophethood has been extended to all mankind while the message of the prophets prior to me was limited to their particular people only. Secondly, my presence creates a feeling of dread in the hearts of my enemy which overtakes him from a distance of one month's travel. Thirdly, the spoils taken from the enemy have been made permissible for my people, while it was prohibited for the early people. Fourthly, Allah has made the whole earth a place for our prayers like a mosque, and made it a purifier (in *tayammum*) for my people, while the prayers of the early people was limited to their churches or synagogues. They were not permitted to pray at home or out in the land. Besides, in the absence of water my people are allowed to make use of soil, in place of water for *tayammum* (a substitute of ablution). The early people were not given this concession." Then, he said, emphatically that the fifth

distinction was, above all, the most promising and helpful. He explained, "Every prophet was asked by Allah to make one particular supplication which was to be essentially acceded to, and every prophet made that invocation for their particular aim. Allah asked me too to make such invocation. I preferred to reserve my invocation until the Day of Judgement which will be of great use to you and to those who follow and bear witness that there is no god but Allah."

Another Tradition reported by Imām Aḥmad on the authority of the Companion Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī رضى الله عنه has contained that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Any one hearing the news of my appearance, be he a Muslim, Christian or Jew must believe in me, otherwise he will be placed in Hell."

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukharī has reported the following incident with regard to this verse: Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنهما once had severe disagreement on a matter. Sayyidnā 'Umar left the place to express his dissent. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه followed him in order to bring him round. Sayyidnā 'Umar being angry with him entered his house and locked the door upon him. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr, having no choice went to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and related the whole story to him. Later, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه had a feeling of regret for misbehaving Sayyidnā Abū Bakr, he too went to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and informed him of the incident. The Companion Abū al-Dardā' رضى الله عنه has reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was annoyed at it. Seeing that Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه was going to be admonished for it, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, "My fault was greater". At this point the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Can you people not leave one of my companions alone and save him from the annoyance on your part? Do you people not know when I declared by the will of Allah يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا "O people, I am a messenger of Allah sent to you all," you all belied me? It was Abū Bakr alone who testified to my Prophethood."

In short, this verse is a clear evidence proving that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been sent to the whole mankind. His message is for all generations and for all times to come and for all places. No one can

achieve salvation without believing in him, even if he is faithfully and devotedly practicing some other faith or book.

The next sentence of the verse reminds people that he has been sent from the One to Whom the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth belongs and who gives life to every living creature and brings death to it. That is, He alone is the Lord of the Universe. The last sentence of the verse said:

فَأْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ النَّبِيِّ الْأُمِّيِّ الَّذِي يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَكَلِمَاتِهِ وَاتَّبِعُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تَهْتَدُونَ

"So, believe in Allah and His Messenger, the *Ummi* (unlettered) prophet who believes in Allah and in his words, and follow him so that you may get the right path."

After establishing the fact that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was sent for all the people of the world and for all times to come, and that there is no other choice for any one but to follow his law - the Islam, the verse enjoins the belief in Allah and in His Messenger, who is Ummi, the unlettered. He, himself believes in Allah and in His words. The people should, therefore, follow him to keep themselves on the right path.

The 'words' كلمات refer to the word of Allah revealed to his prophets like the Torah, Evangile (the book revealed to the Prophet 'Īsā (Jesus)) and the Qur'ān. It may be noted that the command of believing in him is followed by another command of following him. This has indicated that sheer belief or making the verbal utterances of belief, is not enough for guidance or salvation. Practicing Islamic Shari'ah is essentially required for one's salvation in the Hereafter.

The great saint and spiritual leader Sheikh Junaid of Baghdad has remarked that all the paths leading to Allah are closed except the path specifically defined by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم.

The Truthful among the Israelites

The verse 159 said: "وَمِنْ قَوْمِ مُوسَى أُمَّةٌ يَهْتَدُونَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهِ يَعْدِلُونَ" "Among the community of Mūsā there are people who guide to the truth, and do justice thereby." That is, there is a group among the Israelites who follows the

truth and decides their controversies according to the dictates of the Truth - Islam. Which are the people referred to in this verse as following the truth among the Israelites? This refers to the people who faithfully followed the commandments of the Torah and the Injīl at the time they were revealed, and those who readily accepted the faith of Islam after the appearance of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم according to the predictions contained in the Torah and the Injīl. The Holy Qur'ān has referred to this group in a number of verses in commendable terms. There is a verse which said: **مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ أُمَّةٌ قَائِمَةٌ يَتْلُونَ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ آنَاءَ اللَّيْلِ وَهُمْ يَسْجُدُونَ** "Among the people of the Book there are those who are steadfast, they recite the verses of Allah in the night hours, and they prostrate." (2:113)

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ هُمْ بِهِ يُؤْمِنُونَ

"Those to whom We gave the book before this, they do believe in this (Qur'ān)". (28:52)

Under the comments on this verse we find a narrative in the commentaries of Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Kathīr. A group of Israelites who greatly despised the corrupt practices of the Israelites had prayed Allah for having a separate land away from the other tribes so that they might practice according to the original faith preached by the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام. Allah carried them to a land somewhere in the far East where they faithfully practised their faith.

Another favour of Allah bestowed upon them was that in the time of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم they were granted an opportunity to embrace Islam directly on the hands of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. In the night of Ascension (سَبَّحَ مِعْرَاج) the Archangel Jibra'īl (Gabriel) took the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to these people on the way to heavens. They accepted the faith and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم taught them some Sūrahs (chapters) of the Holy Qur'ān.

The Prophet of Allah asked them if they had some means of weighing and measuring and what other means of subsistence did they have? They answered that their usual practice was that they cultivated the land and collected the whole produce together in a heap. The people came and took from it according to their need. They said, "We do not, therefore, need any weights and measures." The Holy

Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked them if any one of them ever told lies. They said that no one among them ever told lies because it was a usual practice that any person speaking a lie was burnt up by a heavenly fire. He asked them as to why all their houses were of the same type? They answered, that it was to avoid the possibility of showing off one's affluence as compared to others. He asked them why they had built up their graves in front of their houses? They said that this made them remember their death all the times.

After the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم returned from heavens to Makkah, this verse was revealed to him. Al-Qurtubī, under the comments of this verse has narrated this event along with other suggestions and has remarked that this narrative was not authentic. Ibn Kathīr, however, has termed it as an unusual event but did not reject it.

In short, this verse makes us understand that there has always been a group among the Israelites who followed the Truth. Be they the people described above or the ones who embraced Islam after the appearance of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم .

Verses 160 - 162

وَقَطَّعْنَهُمْ اثْنَتَيْ عَشْرَةَ أَسْبَاطًا أُمَمًا ۖ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ إِذِ اسْتَسْقَاهُ قَوْمُهُ أَنِ اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ ۖ فَانْبَجَسَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا ۖ قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ مَّشْرَبَهُمْ ۖ وَظَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الْغَمَامَ ۖ وَأَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَنَّٰۤلَ وَالسَّلَٰوِۙ كُلُوا مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ ۖ وَمَا ظَلَمُونَا وَلَكِن كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿١٦٠﴾ وَإِذْ قِيلَ لَهُمُ اسْكُنُوا هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ وَكُلُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ وَقُولُوا حِطَّةٌ وَادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا نَّغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطِيئَتَكُمْ ۖ سَنُرِيدُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٦١﴾ فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي قِيلَ لَهُمْ فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِم رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿١٦٢﴾

And We divided them into twelve tribes, as separate

communities. And we revealed to Mūsā when his people asked him for water, "Strike the rock with your staff." Then twelve springs gushed forth from it. Each tribe came to know their drinking place. And We shaded them with the shadow of the clouds. And we sent down to them the 'Mann' and the 'Salwā'¹ (saying), "Eat of the good things we have provided you." And they did us no harm, rather they have been harming their own selves. [160]

And when it was said to them, "Live in this town and eat therefrom any where you like, and say, 'Hiṭṭah' (we seek forgiveness) and enter the gate prostrating, so that We forgive your errors. We shall give much more to those good-in-deeds." [161]

But those of them who were unjust substituted another word for the one that was said to them. So, We sent down upon them a scourge from the heavens, because they have been transgressing. [162]

The above verses have enumerated various favours that Allah bestowed upon the Israelites, and spoke of their deviation from the commands of Allah resulting in a heavenly punishment for their transgression. The translation of the verses given above is self explanatory and the relevant details have already been given in Sūrah Al-Baqarah (First volume of this book, translation and commentary under verses 57-59, pages 217-221).

Verses 163 - 166

وَسَأَلَهُمْ عَنِ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِي كَانَتْ حَاضِرَةَ الْبَحْرِ إِذْ يَعْدُونَ فِي
السَّبْتِ إِذْ تَأْتِيهِمْ حِيتَانُهُمْ يَوْمَ سَبْتِهِمْ شُرْعًا وَيَوْمَ لَا

1. Manna which is "Man-hu" in Hebrew has been described in Exodus (14:14) in these words, "a small round thing, as small as a hoar frost on the ground". According to 'Abdullāh Yūsuf 'Alī, it usually rotted if left over till next day; it melted in the hot sun. The amount necessary for each man was about an omer, a Hebrew measure of capacity equal to 2 1/2 quarts. This is the Hebrew account probably distorted by traditional exaggeration. The actual Manna found to this day in the region of Sinai is gummy saccharine found on a species of Tamarisk. As to 'Salwā' it is a quail, large flights of them are driven by winds in the Eastern Mediterranean in certain seasons of the year, as was witnessed during the Great War 1914-1918 by many Indian officers who campaigned between Egypt and Palestine. (The Holy Qur'an by Yūsuf Alī vol. 1 page 31) -- Translator.

يَسْتَبْتُونَ لَا تَأْتِيهِمْ كَذَلِكَ نَبْلُوهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿١٦٣﴾
 وَإِذْ قَالَتْ أُمَّةٌ مِّنْهُمْ لِمَ تَعِظُونَ قَوْمًا ۚ اللَّهُ مُهْلِكُهُمْ أَوْ مُعَذِّبُهُمْ
 عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا قَالُوا مَعذِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَسْتَقُونَ ﴿١٦٤﴾
 فَلَمَّا نَسُوا مَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ أَنجَيْنَا الَّذِينَ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ السُّوءِ وَأَخَذْنَا
 الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا بِعَذَابٍ بَّيِّنٍ ۖ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿١٦٥﴾ فَلَمَّا
 عَتَوْا عَنْ مَّانِهِا عَنْهُ قُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ ﴿١٦٦﴾

And ask them about the town which was situated by the sea, when they used to transgress in the matter of Sabbath, when their fish came to them openly on the Sabbath, and did not come when they did not have Sabbath. In this way, We put them to a test, because they used to act sinfully. [163]

And when a group of them said, "Why do you preach to a people whom Allah is going to destroy or punish with a severe punishment? They said, "To absolve ourselves before your Lord, and in order that they may fear Allah." [164]

So when they forgot the advice they were given, We saved those who used to forbid evil and seized those who transgressed, with a bitter punishment, because they had been disobeying. [165]

So, when they persisted in doing what they were forbidden from, We said to them, "become apes, humiliated." [166]

The detailed discussion of the events contained in the above verses have been produced in the first volume of this work in Sūrah Al-Baqarah (under verses 58-60, pages 211-223). Those interested may refer to those verses for details.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to warn the Israelites present in his time by reminding them the events related in these verses. The events referred to in these verses are clear and require no explanation.

Verses 167 - 169

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكَ لَيَبْعَثَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ مَنْ يَسُومُهُمْ
سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ ۖ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَسَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ ۖ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ
﴿١٦٧﴾ وَقَطَّعْنَاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أُمَمًا مِنْهُمْ الصَّالِحُونَ وَمِنْهُمْ
دُونَ ذَلِكَ وَلَكِنْهُمْ بِالْحَسَنَةِ وَ السَّيِّئَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ
﴿١٦٨﴾ فَخَلَفَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ وَرِثُوا الْكِتَابَ يَأْخُذُونَ
عَرَضَ هَذَا الْأَدْنَى وَيَقُولُونَ سَيُغْفَرُ لَنَا وَإِنْ يَأْتِهِمْ عَرَضٌ
مِثْلُ الَّذِي أَخَذُوهُ ۖ أَلَمْ يُؤْخَذْ عَلَيْهِمْ مِيثَاقُ الْكِتَابِ أَنْ لَا يَقُولُوا
عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ وَ دَرَسُوا مَا فِيهِ ۖ وَالذَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ
لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ ۖ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٦٩﴾

And When your Lord declared that He would surely keep sending, till the Day of Doom, those who inflict on them evil punishment. Certainly, your Lord is swift in punishing, and certainly He is the Most-forgiving, Very Merciful. [167]

And we divided them on the earth as separate communities. Some of them are righteous, while some others are otherwise. And we tested them with good (happenings) and with bad happenings, so that they might return. [168]

Then after them, came a generation who inherited the Book, taking to the mundane stuff of this world and saying, "We shall be forgiven." And if there comes to them similar stuff they would take to it (again). Were they not made to enter the covenant contained in the Book that they should not say, about Allah, anything but the truth? And they learnt what it contained. And the abode is better for those who fear Allah. Have you then, no sense? [169]

The first two verses (167 and 168) have referred to the two punishments given to the Israelites. Firstly, Allah will keep sending up to the Day of Doom, some individuals or groups of people who will punish

and bring disgrace to them. In fact, this is what has been happening to them up to this day. They had been dominated and disdainfully treated by others as has been recorded by history. We may not be in doubt about their present government in a part of Palestine, as it is a common knowledge that the state of Israel is, in fact, a part of the world powers, created by them for their political objectives against the Muslim *Ummah*. They are still ruled over and dominated by the colonial powers. It is, in fact, a military base of America. The day these powers stop providing them with their aid they shall not be able to maintain their existence for long.

The second punishment has been mentioned in verse 168. That is, Jewish populace has been cut into fragments scattered in all the parts of the world they could not integrate themselves into a solid nation. The phrase *وَقَطَعْنَاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أُمَمًا* "And we divided them on the earth as separate communities". has referred to this fact. The Arabic word *قَطَعْنَا* signifies breaking into pieces. While the word *أُمَم* is plural of *Ummah*, which means 'a group', 'a party'. The verse means that Allah has divided them into fragments making them scattered on the earth.

This indicates that being integrated in a whole, or having an entity as a nation is a blessing of Allah while getting disorganized into parts separated from each other is a punishment from Him. The Muslims have always enjoyed the blessing of having their own entity, and being recognized as an organized people in the world. Starting right from Madinah in the time of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم up to this day they have their own independent rule in various parts of the earth. The presence of Islamic countries from the far East to the West is an obvious proof of this fact.

Their present state in Palestine should not cause any doubt as they have to come together in a place in the last age according to the prophecies made by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He informed us in authentic Traditions that Prophet 'Isa عليه السلام shall come down to the earth from heavens before the end of the world, and all the Christians shall embrace Islam. He shall fight a war against the Jews and put them to death. The culprits of Allah are not summoned through police, or other agencies; they are driven to their place of death by the causes created by the will of Allah.

The Prophet 'Īsā (Jesus) عليه السلام is to descend from heavens in the land of Syria. He shall fight war with the Jews. The Prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام has been saved the trouble of seeking the Jews in different parts of the world by causing them to gather in Palestine. As to their present political power and sovereignty in the State of Israel, it is a delusion which beguiles only those who are not conversant with the world politics. The so called 'State of Israel' is, in fact, a common camp ground of the big powers like America, Russia, and England. It depends upon the aid of its masters for its existence. It has to serve the aims and objectives of its Masters. They are still living in real servitude, and are deprived of their free rule in true sense of the word.

The Holy Qur'an has informed us of their disgrace and distress up to the end of time in these words:

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكَ لِيُبْعَثَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ مَنْ يَسُومُهُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ

"And when your Lord declared that he would surely keep sending till the Day of Doom, those who inflict upon them an evil punishment."

History has recorded that they have been continually persecuted by one people or another right from the time of the Prophet Sulayman عليه السلام to the present age. Their imprisonment by Nebuchadnassar and persecution at the hands of subsequent kings, then their defeat and ignominious fate at the hands of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Caliph 'Umar al-Fārūq رضى الله عنه ¹ are obvious example of this fact.

The second phrase of this verse is this:

مِنْهُمْ الصَّالِحُونَ وَمِنْهُمْ دُونَ ذَلِكَ

"Some of them are righteous, and some of them are otherwise".

The righteous people among them are those who followed the commandments of the Torah faithfully and did not try to distort them as others did. The people termed as 'otherwise' include infidels and those who obstinately disobeyed their prophets and even killed them. The terms 'righteous' and 'otherwise' may also refer to the people who

1. The recent persecution of the Jews at the hands of Hitler in the second world war is a fresh example of this Qur'anic declaration. (Translator)

believed in the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and followed the Qur'anic guidance after it's revelation. Opposed to them are those believing in the Torah as the word of Allah, disobeyed it or distorted its commandment and thus sold out their eternal salvation for petty gains of this world. The last phrase of this verse has said:

وَبَلَوْنَاهُمْ بِالْحَسَنَاتِ وَالسَّيِّئَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

"And we tested them with good happenings and bad happenings so that they might return."

The "good happenings" refer to their state of prosperity, comfort and ease while 'bad happenings' has reference either to their various persecutions and calamities faced by them throughout their history, or it may have referred to some period of famine coming upon them as punishment. Both the methods of testing their obedience were used in their case. Prosperity and wealth were given to them to see if they show their gratefulness to their Lord. When they were a failure in this test, they were made to undergo many punishments already discussed in the foregoing verses.

Their perversion of thought and practice had gone to such extent that in the time of prosperity they said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ فَقِيرٌ وَنَحْنُ أَغْنِيَاءُ

"Allah is poor and we are rich." (3:181)

while in times of their destitution they said: يدالله مغلوله "Allah's hand is shackled." (5:64) Another implication of the verse is that prosperity or poverty, happiness or suffering are sent as a test to mankind in order to judge the faith and love of the created for the Creator. Both, prosperity and suffering should be of no real concern to the men of understanding, as they are temporary and have to end.

It is, therefore, not wise to show arrogance for one's prosperity or being dejected for one's impoverishment. A persian poet said:

نه شادی داد سامانے نه غم آورد نقصانے

به پیش همت ماهرچه آمد بود مهمانے

"Neither happiness awarded us with real benefit nor did sorrow make us weep. Both came as guests to our resolute spirit."

The verse 169 has said:

فَخَلَفَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ وَرِثُوا الْكِتَابَ يَأْخُذُونَ عَرَضَ هَذَا الْأَدْنَى وَيَقُولُونَ
سَيَغْفِرَ لَنَا وَإِنْ يَأْتِهِمْ عَرَضٌ مِثْلُهُ يَأْخُذُوهُ

"Then, after them came a generation, who inherited the Book, taking to the mundane stuff of this world and saying: 'We shall be forgiven.' And if there comes to them similar stuff, they would take to it (again).

The Arabic word خَلَفَ is a past tense of خَلَاةٌ signifying a deputy or a person trusted with one's work in one's absence.

The second word used here is خَلْفٌ with the merged sound of the second letter *Lām*, generally denoting a deputy who is marked with wickedness, as opposed to the good practices of his elders. The word وَرِثُوا is a derivative of وَرَاةٌ that is, inheritance. The next word is عَرَضٌ meaning something bought with money. Sometimes, it is used just for something possessed. The use of this word for money indicates that any thing owned in this world is temporary, because this word, as an antonym of 'Jauhar' (substance), is used for an object which requires something else to show its existence like colour which requires another thing to show itself. The word أَدْنَى has been derived from دُنُوٌ which denotes nearness or lack of distance. The word ذُنْبٌ is a feminine gender of this word. The word أَدْنَى may also be taken to be a derivative of ذَلَالَةٌ which signifies disgrace. In this case the word shall refer to something disgraced.

The verse implies that there were two groups of people among the early Jews, the righteous and the wrong-doers. The people coming in later generations who inherited the Torah, however, acted opposite to their elders and made the Book an object of trading or a means of their earning. They used to manipulate and distort the text of the Torah for some money offered to them for this purpose. Moreover, "they said: وَيَقُولُونَ سَيَغْفِرُ لَنَا" "We shall be forgiven". In spite of committing as great a sin as distorting the text of the Book of Allah, they claimed their forgiveness by Allah. They are warned of this error in the very next sentence. saying: "وَإِنْ يَأْتِهِمْ عَرَضٌ مِثْلُهُ يَأْخُذُوهُ" "If there comes to them similar stuff they would take to it (again)." That is to say, they are in such a state of perversion that in case they are offered money for changing another

text, they shall readily accept it. The verse has implied that forgiveness of Allah is always there to those who are mindful of their error and turn to their Lord in repentance showing their remorse over what they have done, and making firm promise of not repeating the same mistake again. Being persistent in their sinful acts and claiming their forgiveness is sheer self deception. The next part of the verse puts a question to them, whether they were not made to enter a covenant with Allah that they shall never say anything but truth about Allah. Yes, they read this pledge in their Book. This is nothing but their impudence and obstinacy that stops them from realizing the truth of the Hereafter which is exclusively the fate of those who fear Allah.

Verses 170 - 171

وَالَّذِينَ يَمْسِكُونَ بِالْكِتَابِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّا لَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ
الْمُصْلِحِينَ ﴿١٧٠﴾ وَإِذْ نَتَقْنَا الْجَبَلَ فَوْقَهُمْ كَأَنَّهُ ظُلَّةٌ وَظَنُّوا
أَنَّهُ وَاقِعٌ بِهِمْ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَادْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٧١﴾

And those who hold fast the book and establish the Ṣalāh (are righteous) - Surely, Allah does not waste the reward of the righteous. [170]

And when We raised the mountain over them as though it were a canopy, and they thought it was falling upon them. (We said,) "Hold firmly what We have given to you and remember what is therein, so that you may become God-fearing." [171]

The preceding verse (169) contained a mention of a covenant made with the religious leaders of the Israelites in particular, that they shall not make any changes in the Torah and shall not ascribe to Allah anything but the truth. It has already been mentioned that they violated this pledge and distorted the contents of the Torah for petty amounts of money. This verse is an extension of the same theme. It says that there are some among their religious leaders who are truthfully following the commands of the Torah and are firmly adhering to its guidance. They established the Ṣalāh as was required. The verse has provided with an assurance to such people that they shall not be

deprived of their reward. That is, those who have been true to their faith and fulfilled its demands are righteous people among them.

There are some points of discussion related to this verse. The term 'Book' most probably refers to the Torah. Another possibility is that it refers to all the heavenly books of Allah like Torah, Injīl and the Qur'ān. Another point to be noted is that merely keeping the book of Allah and showing respect to it without following its' commandments does not fulfil the very object of its revelation. It is why the verse has used the word **بِمَسْكُونٍ** "Hold fast", in place of **بِأَحْذَرٍ** or **بِقَرُونٍ** "those who take it or read it. Holding fast the Book requires to follow all it's injunctions and commands.

The next thing we note in this verse is that out of a large number of doctrines of the Torah the verse has made mention of "establishing 'Ṣalāh' only. This is because the Ṣalāh is the most significant and purposeful act among the precepts enjoined by Allah. This is, in fact, the most basic and quintessential way of expressing one's faith in, and obedience to, Allah. Offering the Ṣalāh regularly makes one capable of being regular in other worships more willingly and with more ease. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has termed the Ṣalāh as being the pillar of Islām. The whole edifice of Islam rests on it. Whoever has erected it properly has built the whole structure of his faith on a stronghold. Any one not regular in Ṣalāh, is of no worth to Allah, even if he is seen reciting His name all the times and has unusual visions and does extraordinary acts.

The next verse (171) described another incident of the Israelites when they were forced to promise their obedience to the law of the Torah. It has also been mentioned in the Sūrah al-Baqarah. The Arabic word **رَفَعْنَا** signifies drawing or lifting up. In the Sūrah al-Baqarah the word **رَفَعْنَا** has been used which denotes the act of raising up. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه has therefore, taken the word **رَفَعْنَا** to signify raising high. The Arabic word 'Zullah' **ظله** means a sunshade or a canopy.

The verse refers to the time when the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام came back from the mount of Sināī with the book of Torah. They found therein many injunctions which they thought were difficult for them, to follow. They started showing their unwillingness for obeying those

commandments. Allah commanded the Archangel Jibra'īl عليه السلام to raise the mount of Sināi upon their town. The area of this town is reported to have been three square miles. When the mount of Sināi was hanged over their heads they fell down prostrating themselves out of fear and promised their obedience to the Law of Moses (the Torah). The future events, however, witnessed their deviation from the Law every now and again.

No compulsion in Faith

The above incident gives rise to a question. Why the Israelites were forced to make a promise of their obedience while the Holy Qur'an has declared لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ "There is no compulsion in Faith?" (2:256) The answer is quite simple. None of the disbelievers has ever been forced to accept faith, nor any one is allowed to use force for this purpose. However, those who have already entered the covenant of faith out of their free will and, later, deviate from the commandments of Allah just for avoiding their commitments, shall essentially be forced to abide by the rules and regulations of the Law. In case of deviation from their duty they must be held liable to punishments prescribed by the Law. This is what exactly happened in this incident. They had already believed in Allah and in His Prophet and had entered the covenant of Faith. What they did was to deny from obeying the Law of the Torah and rightly were forced to fulfil their commitment.

Verses 172 - 174

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَى
 أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ شَهِدْنَا أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ
 إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ ﴿١٧٢﴾ أَوْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أَشْرَكَ آبَاؤُنَا مِنْ
 قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ أَفَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ ﴿١٧٣﴾
 وَكَذَٰلِكَ نَفِصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿١٧٤﴾

And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, that is, from their backs, their progeny, and made them testify about themselves, "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Of course You are, we affirm" – lest you should say on the Day of Doom, "We were ignorant of this," [172] or you should say, "It was our forefathers who associated

partners with Allah, and we were (only) a progeny after them. Then, would you destroy us on account of what the false ones did?" [173] And this is how we elaborate the verses, so that they may return. [174]

The covenant of *Alust*: عهد الست

These two verses describe the event of the great heavenly covenant which the Creator, Allah, made with all His created being even before they took the form of their existence. This covenant is known as the covenant of *Alust* (الُسْتُ).

Allah is the creator of all the worlds, the heavens, the earth and whatever exists between them. His infinite wisdom and all-encompassing knowledge has designed and manufactured this universe with as much perfection as leaves no room for any doubt or question. He has created everything with a wise set of rules and regulations. Following these laws ensures people of eternal success and ever-lasting peace and comfort while deviation from these principles makes one liable to punishments prescribed by Allah.

We may also note that His all-encompassing knowledge and infinite wisdom was enough to decide the fate of all the created beings without assigning His angels to watch over and keep the record of the deeds of His servants, and without weighing their deeds in the Balance on the day of Judgement. It is because He is All-Aware of the deeds, even of the hidden thoughts and intentions of His servants without the remotest possibility of making wrong judgement.

His Grace and perfect Justice, however, chose that none should be punished without providing him with documentary evidences of his sinful acts, in a way, that sinner himself finds no choice but to readily acknowledge his sinful deeds.

He appointed some of His angels to record each and every act done by an individual. The Holy Qur'an said:

مَا يَلْفِظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ

"He utters not a word but there is by him a vigilant watcher."¹ (50:18)

1. According to Sayyidnā Ibn ʿAbbās رضي الله عنه everything good or bad about a mortal is recorded by his guardian angels" (A study of al-Qur'an al-Karīm vol. 4 p. 969, by Laʾl Muḥammad Chawla) (Translator)

In another verse the Holy Qur'an said: **كُلِّ صَغِيرٌ كَبِيرٌ مُسْتَطَرٌّ** "And everything small and great is written down." (54:53) Then, on the Day of Judgement the Balance shall be set to weigh the good and bad deeds of all people. Those whose good deeds weigh heavy shall be rewarded with salvation while those whose bad deeds weigh heavier shall be punished.

Moreover, when Allah, the Best of All Judges shall hold His court on the Day of Judgement, He shall call for witnesses on the deeds of every individual. Certain wrongful people shall falsify certain witnesses. Allah shall ask his physical organs to bear witness to his deeds. They shall be given power to speak and bear witness against them. The places where the deeds were done shall also come to witness against them until they shall find no way to belie the witnesses and finally will make confession of their evil deeds. The Holy Qur'an referred to it in these words:

فَاعْتَرَفُوا بِذَنبِهِمْ فَسُحْقًا لِأَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ

"So, they will confess their sins, but far removed (from Allah's Mercy) are the companions of the blazing fire." (67:11)

We also note that Allah, who is the most kind and loving did not leave His servants at the mercy of law and regulations only. He, out of His kindness, provided His servants with complete guidance through His prophets and the Books, in order to save them from eternal punishment.

Like the kind parents who make it essential for their children to go to school every morning also make sure that their children get all their requirements ready before time to facilitate their following the law of school-going with all possible ease. Allah, who is free from all similarities is more loving and kind to His servants than are the parents to their children. He did not only formulate the laws but made them a source of real guidance. Along with the commandments He also taught how people can carry out His commandments with ease and readiness.

Apart from sending His messengers and divine books to His servants He appointed a large number of His angels to help and guide people to the right path. Besides, He created clear signs of His Power and wisdom all around so that people may use their own observation

and understanding to distinguish right from wrong, and to remember their Creator. He repeatedly invited people to make use of their observation and understanding when seeing His signs scattered all around them. He said, in the Holy Qur'an :

وَفِي الْأَرْضِ آيَاتٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَفِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ

"And on the earth are signs for those who have firm faith, and also in your own selves. Do you not see then?" (15:20) ¹

Another arrangement made by Allah to make people act righteously was to make them enter into covenants with Him through His prophets. The Holy Qur'an has references to a number of such covenants made with various people in varied circumstances. The Prophets were made to promise that they shall essentially convey Allah's message to their people without any regard to difficulties and reproach from them. This pious group of prophets did convey Allah's message as faithfully as was possible and sacrificed all that they had in this way.

Similarly the people of every prophet were made to promise to obey their prophet, and in some special cases, to spend all their energy in carrying out particular commands. Some people fulfilled their promise while some others did not.

Among such covenants the most significant one is the covenant which all the prophets were made to enter regarding the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that all the prophets shall follow the last of all prophets and assist him when they find some opportunity to do so. The Holy Qur'an has mentioned this covenant in the following verse:

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِنِّيَّ النَّبِيِّينَ مَا أَنِيتُكُمْ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَحِكْمَةٍ، ثُمَّ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهِ وَلَتَنْصُرُنَّهُ۔

"And when Allah made the prophets take pledge: (saying) If I give you a book and wisdom, then comes to you a messenger

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1. This verse has referred to two kinds of signs; external and internal. The external signs are profusely available all around us; the heavens the earth, the oceans, mountains, plants and trees, fruits of different colour and taste; they provide us with unmistakable guidance to our Lord. The internal signs include the process of our reproduction, our physique, our thoughts, intentions emotions and sentiments of happiness and sorrow. A little reflection on these signs positively leads us to the Creator and makes us to express our gratefulness to Him. (Translator)

verifying what is with you, you shall have to believe in him and you shall have to support him." (3:81) ¹

The Significance of Bay'ah (بَيْعَة: Swearing Allegiance)

The traditional way of taking pledge (*bay'ah*: discipleship) from the devoted followers, is infact, in pursuance of this practice of Allah. The Prophets, their companions and spiritual leaders have been taking the pledge of allegiance from their followers. The incident of 'Bay'ah al-Rizwān' has been mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān. It said:

لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ يُبَايِعُونَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ

"Allah was certainly well pleased with the believers when they swore fidelity to you (O Prophet) under the tree." (48:18)

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم took such pledge of allegiance from his companions on many occasions. 'Bay'ah al-'Aqabah' is a famous pre-migration covenant made with the Anṣārs of Madinah. The customary way of Ṣufis to take pledge from their followers, is a covenant taken for practising the commandments of Allah regularly and strengthening their belief in Allah by frequent remembrance of their Lord. The way of swearing fealty to some one has many advantages and draws 'Barakah' from Allah.

After swearing fealty to some Sheikh (Spiritual Master), a follower feels himself more willing and inclined to practise the religious obligations, and is more conscious in seeking the pleasure of Allah.

The above description of Bay'ah also clears away a misconception common among the men of little knowledge that by putting one's hand in the hands of some Sheikh or spiritual leader is enough for one's salvation in the Hereafter. This is absolutely an erroneous notion as swearing allegiance is a pledge taken for following practical guidance according to the instructions given by the Sheikh. Therefore, only placing one's hands into the hands of a Sheikh is simply of no use. Rather, it is a deviation from the pledge and may incur the wrath of Allah.

1. By implication this pledge taken by all the prophets makes it binding on the followers of all the prophets to believe in the Holy Prophet ﷺ and to follow him and support him in achieving his objectives. It makes binding upon them to follow the law given by the last of all prophets. (Translator)

The verse (172) speaking of the covenant of Eternity *عَهْدَ النَّت* in the preceding pages has used the word *ذُرِّيَّة* for the children of Adam. According to Imām Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī the word *ذُرِّيَّة* has been derived from the Arabic root *ز.ر.* which signifies to create. The Holy Qur'ān has used this word to signify the same meanings in a number of verses. The word '*Dhurriyyah*' (*ذُرِّيَّة*) therefore signifies all those created. This implies that the covenant of Eternity included all the human beings as they are the progeny of Ādam عليه السلام .

We find some more information about this covenant in the literature of *Hadīth*. Imām Mālik, Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī and Imām Aḥmad have reported on the authority of Muslim bin Yasār that some people asked the Caliph 'Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq رضى الله عنه of the connotation of this verse. He said that the same question was put to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the answer of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as he heard it was as follows:

"Allah Almighty first created Ādam عليه السلام, then He placed His hand upon his back, and drew forth all the righteous descendants of Adam who were to come into being and said, "I have created them for the Paradise, and they shall act righteously as to deserve Paradise. Then He placed His hand on the back of Adam and all the wicked descendants that were to come into being appeared. He said, "I have created them for the Hell, and they shall act wickedly as to lead them to Hell."

Someone from among the companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked him, "When Allah has already decided the fate of the mankind why the people are asked to do good deeds, while they are of no effect. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "Whoever is created for Paradise, he starts doing good deeds making him worthy of paradise and he dies in this state, while the one created for the Hell involves himself in wicked acts making him liable of the fires of Hell until he dies doing such deeds as leads him to the Hell."

That is to say, when one is not aware of the category he belongs to, he must invest all his effort and energy in doing such deeds as are the characteristic of the people of Paradise and should be hopeful of his being one among them.

The Tradition reported by Imām Aḥmad on the authority of the Companion Abū al-Dardā' رضى الله عنه has added that the people who appeared the first time were of fair colour while those appearing the second time were black.

The same description reported by Tirmidhi on the authority of the Companion Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه has additionally reported that all the children of Adam who were to come in the world upto the end of time had a kind of brilliance on their foreheads.

Here we are faced with two descriptions apparently differing from one another. The descriptions given by the above traditions have described the children of Ādam coming out of the back of the Prophet Ādam عليه السلام while the Qur'ānic verse under discussion has related them as coming forth from the backs of the progeny of Ādam عليه السلام . In fact, there is no conflict between the two descriptions as the direct descendants of Adam are described as coming forth from the back of Ādam عليه السلام while the people coming after them have been described as coming forth from the backs of his descendants.

The aim of this pledge taken from the whole mankind was to make them acknowledge that Allah Almighty is the Nourisher, The Sustainer or the Lord of all the created beings. This implies that the children of Ādam عليه السلام coming forth from the back of the Prophet Ādam عليه السلام were not in the form of spirit alone but also had a certain kind of physique made of some fine elements. It is because the function of nourishing is directly related to body which is made to progress from one state to another. The spirits do not require this kind of nourishment as they remain in one state from the moment of their creation. This is also supported from the above traditions speaking of the fair and black colour or the brilliance on their forehead because both, the colour and brilliance, require some material form to show their existence. The spirits obviously have no colour.

One may wonder how all the human beings to be created up to the Last Day could have gathered in one place. This also has been explained by the Tradition narrated by the Companion Abū al-Dardā' رضى الله عنه which said that they did not appear with their usual size rather they appeared in the size of a small ant. In this age of scientific knowledge it should be of no surprise how a man of human size can be

reduced to the size of an ant. The science has established the fact that a perfect system similar to our solar system is functioning in and around the nucleus of an atom. The books of hundreds of pages can be reduced to a dot of small size through a process of micro filming. It should not, therefore, be a matter of surprise that Allah, the All-Powerful, might have reduced them to the size of an ant at this occasion.

The above discussion with regard to the covenant of eternity gives rise to a couple of questions:

1. Which was the time and place of the covenant?
2. This pledge was taken prior to the creation of all human beings, excluding Ādam عليه السلام . How did the children of Ādam have knowledge and reason to acknowledge Allah almighty as being the Nourisher or their Lord which requires the experience of their being nourished which was not possible prior to coming as human being on the earth.

The first question has been answered by the Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه as reported through authentic sources by Imām Aḥmad and Nasa'ī that the covenant was taken at the time when Ādam عليه السلام was sent down from heavens to the earth. The place was the valley of Nauman known as the plain of 'Arafāt (Near Makkah).

As to the second question with regard to inability of their acknowledging Allah as their Lord prior to their creation, the answer is quite simple. Allah Almighty who has all the powers to do anything He wills, and who was able to make all the human beings appear in a size of an ant could more easily imbue knowledge and reason enough to make them capable of recognizing their Lord, the Nourisher. Allah made them appear with body and soul in a small size with all the physical functions needed by a perfect human being. Reason and understanding being the most significant functions must have been included.

Another question which remains unsettled is as to what value can be attached to a covenant occurring prior to the actual creation of human beings, and which is not remembered by them after they take their actual existence on the earth? Before proceeding to answer this

question we may add that, in some cases, there have been individuals who remembered the occasion of this covenant. For example, the great spiritual leader Dhul Nūn al-Miṣrī has said, "I remember the occurrence of this covenant as clearly as I am hearing it this very moment." Some of the elders have reported to have remembered even the people who were present near them. True, that such cases are rare and do not make an answer to the above question.

The answer to this question, therefore, is that there are many things or acts which are effective in their very nature without any regard to their being remembered or understood by others. They imprint the effect on others quite naturally.

For example, the common practice, among Muslims, of saying *Adhān* in the right ears of a new born and reciting *iqāmah* in his left ear¹ is an obvious example of such acts. The baby neither understands the meaning of this call nor does he remember it after becoming an adult. The wisdom behind this religious practice is nothing but to revive the pledge he has taken with Allah, and sow the seed of Faith in his heart by repeating the message of the covenant in his ears. The influence of this act is so obvious that can be seen in every Muslim individual even if he is not practically a good Muslim. He takes pride in calling himself a Muslim and utterly dislikes being deprived of this categorical entity.

Similarly the commandment of reciting the Qur'ān even to those who do not know Arabic is perhaps for the same reason that their hearts are enlightened with the impact of the Qur'ānic words, and their Faith in Allah is renovated therewith.

The wisdom behind this covenant is similarly to sow the seed of Faith in the heart of every human being. This seed is taking it's nourishment in the soil of human heart, no matter whether people are conscious of it or not. The fruit of this seed manifests itself in the form of love and respect for god (Allah) which is a part of human nature. The expression of this love and respect, may take unjust forms like

1. *Adhān* is a call for ṣalāh the ritual prayer which in fact is a bold declaration that Allah is one, has no partners, and is the greatest of all etc. while *iqāmah* is the same declaration with added enunciation that the ṣalāh has been set ready to be joined by people. (Translator)

worshipping false gods - idols or created beings. The worships, just or unjust, is in itself, an expression of love and respect for the creator. The billions of people have this respect and love for Allah which is expressed by them through their worship according to their ideas of worship guided by their knowledge or ignorance. There is no need to speak of those few who, under the influence of mundane pursuits have deteriorated their natural understanding and forgot the pledge they made with Allah.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

كُلُّ مَوْلُودٍ يُوَلَّدُ عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ Every baby is born on *Fitrah* (nature, that is, Islam) then he is converted by his parents to their religion. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said in a Tradition that Allah Almighty has said, 'I have created my servants as *Ḥanīf*, that is, having faith in Allah, the one, then they were led astray by Satanic influences.'

The next sentence of the verse has said:

أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ

"Lest you should say on the Day of Doom, "We were ignorant of this."

That is to say, the pledge taken by Allah has lit the candle of Faith in their hearts. Now with little reflection they can easily recognize Him as their Lord. Therefore, their excuse of ignorance shall not be of any avail to them on the Day of Judgement.

Another possible excuse from them was to say:

أَوْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أَشْرَكَ آبَاؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ أَفَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ

"Or you should say, "It was our forefathers who associated partners with Allah and we were (only) a progeny after them. So, would you destroy us on account of what the false ones did?"

The verse precludes them from seeking refuge in saying that they were unaware of the Truth. Being a progeny of their forefathers they only followed their path. Therefore they should not be punished for the error of their forefathers. The verse has said that they shall not be punished for the acts of their forefather. It was their own fault and

their apathetic attitude that led them to this disaster. It is because the covenant had sown the seed of Truth in their heart and it was not difficult for them to decide that the stones, shaped by themselves into idols, or the fire, the trees and other created beings could, in no way, be considered as being their creator or possessing powers of helping them in their need.

The next verse 174 said:

وَكَذَلِكَ نَفْصَلُ الْآيَاتِ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

"And this is how we elaborate the verses, so that they may return."

That is, Allah has made His signs clear through His elaborate verses to facilitate people to turn back to their pledge and acknowledge Him as their Lord. Any one applying his reason can find the Truth and save himself from ever lasting punishment.

Verses 175 - 177

وَإِذْ عَلَّمْنَاهُ نَبَأَ الذِّيقِ أَتَيْنَاهُ الْيَتِيمَ فَانْسَلَخَ مِنْهَا فَأَتْبَعَهُ الشَّيْطَانُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْغَاوِينَ ﴿١٧٥﴾ وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَرَفَعْنَاهُ بِهَا وَلَكِنَّهُ أَخْلَدَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ الْكَلْبِ إِنْ تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْهِ يَلْهَثْ أَوْ تَتْرُكْهُ يَلْهَثْ ذَلِكَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا فَاقْصُصِ الْقَصَصَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٧٦﴾ سَاءَ مَثَلًا الْقَوْمُ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَأَنْفُسَهُمْ كَانُوا يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿١٧٧﴾

And recite to them the story of the one whom We gave Our verses, then he wriggled out himself from them, so the Satan overtook him and he became one of the perverted. [175] And if We so willed, We would have elevated him thereby, but he clung to the earth and followed his desire. So, his example is like the example of a dog, if you attack him, he pants, and if you leave him alone he pants. That is the example of those who belied our signs. So, relate the chronicles, so that they may ponder." [176] Evil is the example of those who have belied our signs and have been doing wrong to themselves. [177]

The above verses have described the story of a religious leader of the Israelites who had a great following for his piety and knowledge but suddenly went astray and became among the rejected. This event contains a number of lessons and points of exhortation, and has a link with the preceding verses. The foregoing verses spoke of the covenant made by Allah with the children of Adam in general, and with certain people in varied circumstances. The above verses also made a mention of those people who did not fulfil their pledge with Allah. For example, the Israelites who were waiting the arrival of a prophet and used to describe his attributes to others, but after the Holy Prophet ﷺ made his appearance, they rejected him just for wordly considerations.

The story of Bal'am bin Bā'ūrā

The present verses have related the story of a saintly person among the Israelites. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to relate this story to his people to show how a devoted scholar and great spiritual leader was deprived of all the knowledge, wisdom, popularity and fame only by following the mundane desires.

We do not find any personal identification or name of this person mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. There are, however, many Traditions reported by the exegetes of the Holy Qur'an and the Companions and their disciples, giving a variety of information about him. The most authentic and trusted by the majority of scholars is the Tradition reported by Ibn Marduwhi on the authority of the Companion 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbās which is as follows:

The name of this man was Bal'am bin Ba'ura. He belonged to Syria living in Cana'an near Jerusalem. According to a report he was an Israelite by birth. He had knowledge of certain books revealed by Allah. The Qur'anic phrase "الَّذِي آتَيْنَاهُ الْكِتَابَ" "The one whom We gave Our verses" refers to the same knowledge.

This event belongs to the period after the death of pharaoh and his people and the victory of the Israelites over Egypt. Allah commanded The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and his people to fight war against a people called Jabbarīn. The Jabbarīn who had seen the fate of Pharaoh and his people were greatly frightened when they saw the army of the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام approaching them. They came to Bal'am and said that the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was a strong man and that he had

come with great army in order to expel them from their land. He should therefore pray Allah that He may turn them back without fighting war against them. Bal'am bin Bā'ūrā was known to be having the knowledge of "اِسْمِ اَعْظَم" (the most gracious name of Allah). He used to pray with the help of this name and his prayers were generally granted.

Bal'am said to them that Mūsā, being the prophet of Allah, had the support of Allah's angels and he could not pray against him. He said that he knew the rank that Mūsā عليه السلام held with Allah, and that by praying against him he will ruin himself both in this world and in the world to come. Being insisted by the people Bal'am promised that he will first seek the consent of Allah for such a prayer, and in case Allah permitted him to pray against Mūsā he shall do so accordingly.

He performed some act to seek Allah's consent and in a dream was prohibited by Allah from making such prayer. He came to the people and informed them of this prohibition. The Jabbārīn presented him a gift of considerable value which he accepted. Subsequent to this gift their insistence increased. Some reports said that his wife advised him to accept the gift, and pray for them. Being blinded by the love of wealth and wife, he started praying against the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and his people. An unusual thing happened at this occasion. By the will of Allah the words he wanted to utter against the Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام in his invocation, were uttered against the people of Jabbārīn themselves. They cried out and admonished him that he was invoking against themselves. Bal'am said that he was unable to utter a word against Mūsā عليه السلام and that he had no control over his utterances.

Consequently the Jabbārīn met the fate of disaster from the heavenly punishment, and the punishment of Bal'am was that his tongue protruded from under his mouth so much so that it dangled on his chest. Bal'am having ruined his life both in this world and in the world to come and being deprived of all spiritual powers he had, made a suggestion to the people of Jabbārīn saying, "There is only one way you can overcome the Israelites. Decorate your beautiful girls and send them to the Israelites giving them instructions that they should not put on any resistance against whatever is done by the Israelites. Being away from their homes they are likely to involve themselves in

adultery. Being the most detestable act to Allah, adultery has to incur the wrath of Allah. An adulterous people can never win over their enemy." This satanic suggestion was accepted by the people and they acted accordingly. A prominent person of the Israelites fell prey to this trap. The Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام made all his effort to stop him from this act but he involved himself in this wicked act.

Consequently plague overtook them as a punishment, with a death toll of seventy thousand people in one day. The person who had committed the sin was murdered along with the girl and was hung by the Israelites at a public place. Then they turned to Allah in repentance and asked His forgiveness, which relieved them of this disgraceful punishment.

The Holy Qur'an used the expression of 'wriggling out' for Bal'am's disregard to the knowledge and wisdom Allah had given to him through His verses. The Arabic expression "فَاسْلَخَ مِنْهَا" "He wriggled out from the verses of Allah" signifies coming out of an animal from its skin like a snake which leaves its old skin behind having no concern with it. This indicates that Bal'am had totally disregarded the knowledge and wisdom he was granted by Allah. The text phrase: فَاتَّبَعَهُ الشَّيْطَانُ "So, Satan overtook him" implies that as long as he possessed the knowledge of the verses of Allah, Satan was unable to possess him. As soon as Bal'am was deprived of this great gift of Allah, he overtook him and led him astray. Consequently he became one of the misguided people فَكَانَ مِنَ الْغَوِينَ "And he became one of the misled.

The next verse (176) has said:

وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَرَفَعْنَاهُ بِهَا وَلَكِنَّهُ أَخْلَدَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ

"And if We so willed, we would have elevated him thereby, but he clung to the earth, and followed his desire."

The word أَخْلَدَ (*Akhlada*) is a derivative of اِخْلَدَ which means to incline or to cling to something. The word اَرْض (*ard*) meaning the earth includes the globe itself and all the things present. Furniture, machines, clothes and food are in fact, the gift of this earth. By implication all the worldly possessions have been taken to include in a single word - the earth. The quintessence of this verse is that the knowledge of the verses of Allah are the real source of gaining prominence and advance-

ment. For those who show disregard to them and give preference to worldly desires and possessions, this very knowledge becomes a source of disgrace and disaster for them.

The verse under discussion has expressed this fact by way of a similitude. It said.

فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ الْكَلْبِ إِنْ تَحْمِلَ عَلَيْهِ يَلْهَثُ أَوْ تَتْرُكْهُ يَلْهَثُ

"So his example is like the example of a dog; if you attack him, he pants, and if you leave him alone he pants."

The word لهث (*Lahath*) signifies to breath hard by ejecting one's tongue out.

The process of inhaling fresh air and exhaling unclean air is vital for every living being. Allah has made this process as automatic and easy as requires no effort on the part of living creatures - dog excepted. It is only dog that has to labour hard for the process of breathing, while other animals have to make such effort only when they are attacked or undergo some strenuous task. Bal'am b. Baura has been mentioned in this verse as being similar to dog. He had his tongue protruded and panted like a dog who pants when attacked and pants when let alone.

The next sentence of the verse said: ذَلِكَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا بآيَاتِنَا "That is the example of those who belied our signs." According to the Companion 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه "this has a reference to the Israelites of Makkah who were always longing for some one sent to them as their leader inviting them to Allah and teaching them the ways of following the right path. When this long-awaited prophet came to them with as transparent signs of Truth as left no room for the resistance in his way, they too, 'wriggled out' from the commandments of Torah exactly as Bal'am Bā'urā had done.

The last sentence of this series said: فَأَنْصِتْ لِقِصَصِ النَّصِصِ لَعَلَّكُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ "So relate the chronicles (to them) so that they may ponder." The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to relate the story of Bal'am Ba'ura to them in order that they may take lesson from it and use their understanding.

The last verse in this series 176 said, "So evil is example of those

who belied our signs and they have been doing harm to themselves."

The General Message of the Verses

The above verses contain a number of useful points for the benefit of those who are heedful and make use of their understanding. Firstly, no one should be boastful of his knowledge and be proud for his piety. Things can change without notice just as happened with Bal'am Ba'ura. One has to be grateful to his Lord for all the knowledge and wisdom he has, and should keep praying Allah for being firm in his faith.

Secondly, one should avoid situations which seem to threaten his faith and knowledge. Specially so, when money, wife and children are involved because the love of these things is the most powerful agent of misguidance.

Thirdly, one should avoid the company of the misguided people and be careful in accepting gift or invitation from them. Bal'am met the evil fate through accepting the gift of the Jabbārīn.

Fourthly, the acts of immodesty like adultery and fornication are the source of ruin and disaster for all the people living in a society. Those who want to save themselves from distress must prevent their people from committing such crimes, otherwise it will invite Allah's wrath and punishment upon them.

Fifthly, deviation from the commandments of Allah is, in itself a punishment and it opens the door to satanic influences, which work upon them quite unknowingly and lead them astray. Therefore, any one with knowledge must be conscious of this valuable treasure and seek Allah's help in protecting it from evil influences. He must carefully keep correcting himself against error.

Verses 178 - 179

مَنْ يَّهْدِ اللَّهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِىٌّ وَمَنْ يُضِلِّ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ
 ﴿١٧٨﴾ وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ
 لَا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لَا
 يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا أُولَئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ

الْغٰفِلُونَ ﴿١٧٩﴾

The one whom Allah gives guidance is the one on the right path; as for those whom Allah lets go astray, those are the losers. [178] And surely We have created for Hell a lot of people from among Jinn and mankind. They have hearts wherewith they understand not, have eyes wherewith they see not, and have ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle. Rather, they are much more misled. They are the heedless. [179]

The main theme of the verse 178 is that guidance and misguidance both are from Allah. He is the creator of good and evil, guidance and misguidance. The guided are those whom Allah has given guidance and losers are those whom Allah lets go astray. This theme has been mentioned repeatedly by the Qur'ān in many other verses to make the mankind know that Allah has created good and evil and has provided with clear instructions to distinguish one from the other, and with a kind of free will to choose one of the two paths. Those who willfully choose the right path and do good deeds get their reward from Allah while those who willfully take to the other path and do evil deeds are punished and sent to Hell.

Here we note that the above verse has mentioned the people of guidance in singular person while the people who are wrong and misguided have been mentioned in plural. This indicates that the path of guidance is the one true faith which was followed by all the prophets right from Ādam عليه السلام to the last of all Prophets ﷺ. The basic message of all the prophets has been one and the same. That is to say, the fundamentals preached by all the prophets were all same in every age. Therefore, people of any age and denomination who believed in their prophets and followed the teachings preached by them are considered by Allah belonging to one and the same category - that is, the guided. On the contrary, the ways of misguidance have been thousands in number, hence mentioned in plural in this verse.

Another point to be noted in this verse is that the people following the path of misguidance have been mentioned along with their punishment of Hell, while no mention has been made of any reward of the people following the right path. The verse mentioned them saying that

they are 'the guided'. This implies that guidance, in itself, is the greatest blessing of all, which encompasses all the rewards and bounties existing in this world or in the Hereafter. The reward of guidance requires no specific mention of other rewards which are embodied therein.

For example, some great king assures some individual that he is a close friend of the king and he shall be heard and trusted by him. Certainly he enjoys the highest position among the royal officials. He does not require the achievement of a formal rank or position. Similarly, when Allah has given the title of being 'the guided' to any one, he has got all the rewards of the world. The elders, have therefore said that the remembrance and worship of Allah are themselves the reward of the worship, because they are the great favour of Allah.

Any one engaged in the worship of Allah is receiving the greatest reward of Allah at the same time. Other blessings which wait for him in this world and in Paradise are second to it, as they are the fruit of this guidance.

This also explains the meaning of another Qur'ānic verse in which the believers are promised to receive from their Lord their reward. It said جَزَاءٌ مِّن رَّبِّكَ عَطَاءٌ "A recompense from your Lord, a gift." Here the reward of the believers has been expressed by two different words جَزَاءٌ a recompense and 'Atā which is gift. The word جَزَاءٌ signifies something offered in return of some service while the word: 'Atā is a gift offered without any service or performance. This leads us to the fact that things which we take to be rewards of our performance or attainments are, in fact, the gift from our Lord. For the performance which has drawn this reward was in itself a gift from Allah Almighty who let us perform that particular service.

The next verse is an extension of the same theme. It said:

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَعْنَا لِيُفْسِدُوا فِيهَا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَذَانٌ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا

"And surely, we have created for Hell a lot of people from among Jinn and mankind. They possess heart wherewith they understand not, have eyes wherewith they see not and they have ears wherewith they hear not."

That is, many Jinns and human beings have been created for Hell, because in spite of having all the means of guidance, the heart, the eyes and the ears, they do not use them to seek guidance. They could find the right path, had they used these faculties in proper way. They do not use their hearts to understand, their eyes to see things to be seen and their ears to hear things to be heard.

As a substance of the verse we are given to understand that ultimate end or destiny is a divine secret, not known to any one, but there are definite signs which help us to make a surmise. The people of Hell can be identified by their characteristic sign of not making proper use of their faculties of seeing, hearing and understanding. Allah has blessed us with these faculties for acquiring knowledge and recognition of our Lord. The people of Hell invest these abilities in worthless objectives and are evidently heedless of the real aim of man's life, that is, to earn with his capabilities eternal comfort and peace in the Hereafter through seeking guidance.

A Question and it's answer

A question may be asked about the above Qur'ānic verses. Here the Holy Qur'ān, has negated their qualities of hearing, seeing and understanding. On the other hand, we see that in real life they are not blind, deaf and insane. Like other human beings they do see, hear and understand things around them. How can this negation be reconciled with the actual fact?

The answer requires to refresh our usual knowledge with regard to things and living beings around us. Every thing created has an amount of sensibility equal to the need of it's purpose of existence. The things we call inanimate are not totally devoid of sensibility or life. The stones and the earth which are not assigned with the duty of growth or movement have so little an amount of sensitivity that can hardly be detected.¹

1. Human reason essentially requires the presence of some kind of perception or life in things called inanimate. It is because there must be some way of communication between the Creator and the created. The one who cannot communicate with created beings for the absence of sensibility on their part, is not worthy of being called god. Allah does communicate with all His created beings, animate or inanimate, which proves some kind of sensibility in all inanimate things. (Translator)

The vegetable Kingdom comes next in this series. The purpose of their existence requires growth and nourishment. The amount of perception or life given to them is greater in degree and is equal to their requirements. Next we come to animal kingdom where we find more elaborate and complex form of life. In addition to growth and nourishment, the animals have to move on the earth from one place to another. They have to seek their food to maintain their existence. They require to protect themselves from dangers and above all, they are required to reproduce their children. The amount of life given to them is greater and more obvious than the others so far discussed. They are, however, equipped with as much powers only as were needed to assist them in feeding and protecting themselves from dangers and enemies.

The last, but not the least, is human being who, in addition to, and more prominent of all the functions discussed above, has the duty of recognizing his Creator and the Lord of the universe, and seek His pleasure by following His commandments and avoid doing things disliked by Him. He is required to contemplate and give due thought to the creations and use his faculty of reason to distinguish right from wrong, abstain from evil and do good to please his Lord. Another distinction of a human being from other creatures is that he has been provided with vast opportunity to make progress in making his life more purposeful and more elevated in position. When he comes to make progress, he can attain more elevated rank than the angels. He is accountable for his acts and is promised of eternal peace and comfort for his good acts and everlasting punishment and distress for his evil deeds. He has been, therefore, trusted with the highest and the most perfect degree of life, in order that he is engaged in doing things that are proper for the aim of his life. He is not expected to waste his special faculties of understanding, hearing and seeing in the achievement of material things only like animals.

Keeping the above points in view, the human faculties of understanding, hearing and seeing should essentially be distinct from those of the animals. If he did not make special use of these faculties like distinguishing right from wrong, doing good and keeping away from evil, he would be rightly considered among those who have eyes but do not see, have ears but do not listen, have mind and heart but do not

understand. The Holy Qur'an has therefore termed them as صَمٌّ بُكْمٌ عُمْيٌ "deaf, dumb and blind".

The verse therefore has not negated their physical ability of seeing, hearing and understanding. Rather, the Holy Qur'an has affirmed their knowledge about worldly things in the following words,

يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ غَفِلُونَ

"They know the outward aspect of this worldly life, but of the Hereafter they are heedless." (30:7)

In another verse the Holy Qur'an, speaking the destruction of the people of 'Ād and Thamūd, said: وَكَانُوا مُسْتَبْصِرِينَ "While they could see clearly." (29:38)

The people of 'Ād and Thamūd being allured by satanic influences involved themselves in evil deeds which led them to their destruction. That is to say they kept the use of their capabilities limited to abject worldly gains like serving their physical needs and remained heedless to their spiritual demands. No matter what great advances they make in science and technology, they may conquer space, explore moon and other planets, make the world full of their sophisticated satellites, and tame the natural forces to serve their varied needs, but all such efforts are no more than a means of serving their physical and material life. It does not go beyond, to seek spiritual peace and comfort. This achievement science and technology of man is certainly confined to serving his physical life only, which does not make him distinct from the animal in technicality. It is why the Holy Qur'an calls them deaf, dumb and blind because they heard, saw and understood things that belonged to this world only. They did not make proper use of these functions which could lead them to eternal success and peace. The last phrase of this verse said that they are like cattle investing all their effort in serving their bodily desires. Next the verse added بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ "Rather they are much more misled." that is, they are far more unwise than are the cattle, because the animals are not bound to follow the laws of the Shari'ah. They have no reward or punishment for their acts. They are required only to serve their physical needs which they are efficiently doing, contrary to human beings who are accountable for everything they do in this world, and they are going to be punished

or rewarded according to their performance. If they confine their effort only to seek material gains of this world and do not make proper use of their faculties, they are certainly more imprudent and unwise as compared to animals.

Verse 180

وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا ۖ وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ
فِي أَسْمَائِهِ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٨٠﴾

And for Allah there are the most beautiful names. So, call Him by them, and leave those who deviate in (the matter of) His names. They shall be recompensed for what they have been doing. [180]

This verse has a relationship with the preceding verses in the sense that the people of Hell discussed above did not use their abilities in seeking the everlasting comforts of the Hereafter, and made themselves liable to eternal punishment. The present verse has provided with remedy of their disease. That is, seeking help from Allah by calling Him with His good names and often remembering Him through them.

The good names of Allah

The good names are the ones that denote the attributes having the highest degree of perfection. It goes without saying that the perfection of the highest degree is not possessed by any one but Allah. In case of a 'perfect' human being there is always a possibility of someone being higher than him in some qualities. This is what the Qur'anic phrase has said: رَفَعْنَا كُلَّ ذِي عِلْمٍ عَلَيْهِ "And above every man of knowledge there is someone more knowledgeable." (12:76)

The style of the verse has suggested that these 'beautiful names' are peculiarly meant for Allah. فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا "So, call Him by them", because there is none other than Allah who owns these attributes, therefore the only one worthy of being called in need is none but He. Calling is a rendering of the word دَعَا which has two characteristics: Praising, purifying and remembering Allah, and calling Him for help in times of need or difficulty. It implies, that Allah alone is worthy of praise and glorification and He alone has to be called for help and relief. The verse has also suggested that the best method of calling Him is to call

Him by His Beautiful Names.

Preconditions of *Du'a* (calling Allah)

The verse has provided us with two valuable informations. firstly, there is none other than Allah worthy of praise and worthy of being called for help. Secondly, Allah has provided us with specific words for calling him, proper to His glorious being, as we are not capable of choosing appropriate words for this purpose. That is, we are required to call Him by His attributes of perfections.

Bukhari and Muslim have reported on the authority of the Companion Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

"There are ninety nine names of Allah. Whoever learns them by heart shall enter paradise."

Tirmidhī and Ḥākim have enumerated these names in detail. Invocations made by reciting these names are generally granted. Allah has promised in the Holy Qur'an اُدْعُونِي أَجْزِبْ لَكُمْ "Call me and I will answer you" (40:60). The most definite and certain method of seeking help in one's need and getting relief from one's distress is calling Allah and praying Him for His help. This is the only way that is certain to meet success. The immediate benefit of praying to Allah is that it is, in itself, a worship. The reward of this worship is included in the sheet of one's deeds.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said in a Tradition: اَلدُّعَاءُ مِمَّا تُعْبَادُ "Invoking Allah is the quintessence of worship." The invocation is granted by Allah in many ways. Sometimes, the very thing for which the invocation has been made is granted by Allah, while some other times, when one asks for something untimely or unsuitable for him in the knowledge of Allah is exchanged with something more proper or beneficial for him.

Remembering Allah by glorifying and praising Him is the food for one's Faith in Allah (*Īmān*) which helps in magnifying the love, respect and awareness of Allah making the hardship of this world worthless in one's eyes.

Al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Tirmidhī and Nasā'ī have reported through authentic sources that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said that any one

who finds himself in some difficulty or is distressed with some grief should recite the following words:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ الْعَظِيمُ الْحَلِيمُ، لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا
اللَّهُ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِيمِ

"There is no god but Allah, the Greatest, the Most forbearing,
There is no god but Allah, the Lord of the great Throne. There
is no god but Allah, the Lord of the Heavens, and the earth
and the Lord of the Glorious Throne."

Hākim in his Mustadrak has reported on the authority of the Companion Anas رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said to his daughter Sayyidah Faṭimah al-Zahra رضى الله عنها :

"What is there to prevent you from hearing my advice of reciting the following invocation at morning and evening every day?"

يَا حَيُّ يَا قَيُّوْمُ بِرَحْمَتِكَ أَسْتَغِيْثُ أَصْلِحْ لِيْ شَأْنِيْ كُلَّهُ وَلَا تَكِلْنِيْ إِلَى نَفْسِيْ
طَرْفَةَ عَيْنٍ

"O The Alive, The All-Sustaining, I call for help by Your Mercy. Set right every situation that I am in, and do not leave me at the mercy of my innerself for even a wink of an eye."

The above invocation is also an effective remedy of hardships and distress. In short, we have been given two instructions in this verse namely making invocation to Allah alone for seeking help or for pleasing the Creator, secondly, calling Allah by His attributes of perfection without changing them.

The next sentence said:

وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِيْ أَسْمَائِهِ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

"And leave those who deviate in (the matter of) His names.
They shall be recompensed for what they had been doing."

The Arabic word *الْحَد* *Ilhād* signifies to decline from the centre. In Qur'anic terminology the word *Ilhād* is used for deviating from the correct interpretation of the Qur'anic words or distorting the meanings of the Qur'anic message.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to keep away from

the people who distort or decline from the prescribed names of Allah.

The Deviation from the good names

There are many forms of deviating from the prescribed names of Allah. Firstly, calling Allah by such names as are not specified in the Holy Qur'an or in the Sunnah. The 'Ulamā' (Scholars) of the *ummah* are unanimous on the point that it is not permissible to call Allah by any names or attributes of one's own choice or to praise Him by the names which have not been specified by the Qur'an and the Sunnah. For example, Allah may be called by the word: نور *Nūr* (light) but not by the word 'white'. Similarly Allah may be called '*Karīm*' (generous) but not by the word '*Sakhī*': سخي having the same meaning. He can be called Shāfī شافي (The one who provides cure from disease) but not '*Tabīb*' (The doctor). Though the matching words carry the same meanings they are not allowed simply because they have not been reported by the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*.

The second way of deviating from these names of Allah is to abandon certain name or names only because one thinks them to be inappropriate in certain situations. It, obviously, amounts to lack of respect to the glorious names of Allah.

Calling the people with the names of Allah

The third way of deviation from these names is to use any of the good names of Allah for other people. This however, has some exceptions as explained in the following lines:

There are certain names in the list of the glorious names of Allah which have been used by the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* for human beings. Such names can be used for beings other than Allah. For example, Raḥīm, Rashīd, 'Alī, Karīm and 'Azīz etc., while there are other names which denote to exclusive attributes of Allah. Their use for any one other than Allah is an act of deviation from these names. For example, Raḥmān, Razzaq, Subḥān, Khāliq, Quddūs and Ghaffār etc. Using such names for any one other than Allah is prohibited in the Islamic Shari'ah.

Now, if some one calls any one other than Allah by these names because of his false belief, that he has the attributes denoted by these names it would be an act of infidelity. However, if some one used any

of these names for any one other than Allah just heedlessly and for the lack of knowledge, it would not be an act of infidelity, but having similarities with it would be called a major sin.

It is a pity that Muslims in general are having a number of wrong practices with regard to naming their children and calling them by improper names.

There is a group of people who have abandoned the practice of naming their children with Islamic names. Their modern names having, non Islamic character, mark it difficult to identify them as Muslims by their names. Specially so, when their general appearance and manners are already devoid of Islamic character. The Islamic female names like Khadījah, 'Ā'ishah, and Fāṭimah have been replaced with Najma, Pervīn, Nasīm, Shamīm and Shahnāz etc.

More doleful practice among Muslims is to heedlessly curtail the Islamic names like 'Abd al-Khālīq, 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Abd al-Razzāq or 'Abd al-Quddūs etc. to Khālīq, Raḥmān, Razzāq and Quddūs when calling people of these names. The attributes Khālīq (the creator) Raḥmān (the Merciful) Razzāq (The sustainer) and Quddūs (The Pure) are all exclusive attributes of Allah and using these attributes for any one other than Allah is a major sin (كُفْرًا كَبِيرًا). The number of times one calls any one by these attributes only commits a major sin every time and becomes liable of great punishment.

This sinful practice has become quite common among Muslims for no gain. They have been committing this sinful act simply for being thoughtless to the gravity of this error. The present verse has warned against it by saying سَيَجْزُونَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ "They shall soon be recompensed for what they have been doing".

Many evils are committed for certain worldly gains or benefits. Any one committing such evil deed may pretend to offer an excuse that being constrained by some necessity he had committed the sin, while a great number of evil deeds are simply of no avail, and produce no worldly benefit at all. It is a sad situation that people are seen committing such evil deeds just for being careless of the commandments of Allah and being indifferent to what is prohibited or permitted by Allah. May Allah save us from such ignorance.

Verses 181 - 185

وَمِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا أُمَّةٌ يَهْدُونَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهِ يَعْدِلُونَ ﴿١٨١﴾ وَالَّذِينَ
كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُمْ مِّنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٨٢﴾
وَأُمْلِي لَهُمْ إِنَّ كَيْدِي مَتِينٌ ﴿١٨٣﴾ أَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوا مَا
بَصَّاحِهِمْ مِّنْ جَنَّةٍ ۚ إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٨٤﴾ أَوَلَمْ
يَنْظُرُوا فِي مَلَكُوتِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ مِنْ
شَيْءٍ ۚ وَأَنْ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونَ قَدِ اقْتَرَبَ أَجَلُهُمْ فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍ
بَعْدَهُ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٨٥﴾

And among those We have created, there are people who guide with truth and do justice thereby. [181] As for those who belie Our signs, We let them be drawn gradually (towards their punishment) from where they do not know. [182] And I give them respite. Surely My plan is firm. [183] Have they not reflected that with their friend there is no madness? He is but an open warner. [184] Have they not looked into the kingdoms of the heavens and the earth, and into the things Allah has created, and into the fact that their time might have possibly drawn near? In what other word, then, shall they believe after it? [185]

The previous verses offered a remedy of calling Allah by His good names to those who were neglectfully not making proper use of their faculties. Now the verse 181 speaks of those who followed the right path. The verse said, "And among those we have created, there are people who guide with truth and do justice thereby. That is, they are a people who guide others to the straight path and decide all their matters according to the dictates of truth (the divine law).

Ibn Jarīr has reported from his own sources that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم recited this verse and said, "The people referred to in this verse are my people who shall decide their controversies according to justice and truth and observe justice in all their dealings."

‘Abd ibn Ḥumaid has reported that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم

said addressing his companions, "This verse has been revealed in your favour and prior to you there has been a group of people bearing the same attributes." Then he recited this verse:

وَمِنْ قَوْمٍ مُّوسَىٰ أَمَّمَهُ يَهْدُونَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهِ يَعْدِلُونَ

"And among the community of Musa there are people who guide with truth and do justice thereby." (7:159)

That is to say, there was a group of people among the Israelites who had the attributes referred to in this verse, of guiding other people to the truth and deciding their matters according to the law of the Torah. Similarly, the Muslim *Ummah* has the same attributes as their distinct feature.

The essence of the message is firstly, to guide people to the right path in accordance with the dictates of the Shari'ah, and secondly, to decide all their controversies according to the law of Islam. The above two features offer, in fact, the guaranteed way of success, both in this world and in the Hereafter. Any group or individuals who follow the truth and justice in all their modes of life, and do not exhibit their personal prejudices while making judgements even for their enemies, are the people of truth referred to in this verse. The same has been the main characteristic of the Muslim *Ummah* who strictly observed the demands of truth and justice in all their dealings and overlooked their personal priorities when making judgements between people. The history has recorded unique examples of such truthful practices from the lives of the blessed Companions and their disciples.

From the day the Muslims started to show disregard to these two distinctive features of their character, an evident regression started to show itself in every sphere of their life. Remorsefully though, we have to acknowledge that majority of the Muslim *Ummah* have fallen prey to their personal desires. All their activities, their political, social and educational set ups are motivated by downtrodden worldly gains. Their guidance to other people is mainly aimed at getting some worldly benefits. Most of their family ceremonies are not only devoid of Islamic character, but demonstrate a behaviour opposed to Shari'ah. There are some family traditions designed in the name of religious ceremonies. Any one going against or showing dislike to these innova-

tions has to face active opposition on their part. People are no more interested in organizing themselves purely for the propagation of truth and justice.

There is none to make them realize that this course of thought and action has to bring disaster to the Muslims at large. The only way to restore the dignity of the Muslim *Ummah* and to bring them back to the path of progress and prosperity is to follow the way of truth and justice suggested by this verse. Conscious efforts should be made to create an awareness of these values among the Muslims.

The next verse (182) has provided answer to a common question which bothers the minds of many Muslims. If prosperity and progress can only be achieved by following the way of truth and justice why the non-Muslim nations of the world are seen more prosperous, more advanced and more powerful while they are very far from the truth? The verse answered this question in these words:

وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُمْ مِّنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

"As for those who belie our signs, we shall let them be drawn gradually towards (their punishment) from where they do not know."

That is to say, Allah does not punish those who reject the signs or verses of Allah immediately for their sins. He, out His wisdom and Mercy, lets them enjoy their worldly life for a while and then draws them to their ignominious end as gradually as they do not know of their being led to their ill-fate. The present prosperity and progress of the non-Muslims should, therefore, not deceive people, because their prosperity, in fact, is not something propitious for them. Rather it is a kind of respite, a temporary period of relief before the execution of their punishment, which in Qur'anic terminology is called *Istidrāj* (إِسْتِدْرَاج). *Istidrāj* is a more powerful punishment in disguise. The most essential element of *Istidrāj* is that a person is not punished for his evil deeds immediately; the more he increases in his evil deeds, the more he is increased in prosperity and worldly possessions which prevents him from having a sense of guilty and taking warning against his crimes. Consequently, he is deprived of turning in repentance to Allah and save himself from everlasting punishment. This perverted state of mind makes one take illness as health and poison as

remedy. He is let to go on with his perverted life until death overtakes him and draws him to the eternal chastisement.

The Holy Qur'an has made mention of '*Istidrāj*' in many other verses. It said in Sūrah al-An'am:

فَلَمَّا نَسُوا مَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ أَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَتَّى إِذَا فَرِحُوا بِمَا
أُوتُوا أَخَذْنَاهُمْ بَغْتَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْلِسُونَ

"So, when they forgot what they were required to remember, We opened to them the gates of everything, until, when they were rejoicing in what they were given, We seized them suddenly, and then they were confounded in despair." (6:44)

Dealing with *Istidrāj* is not limited to disbelievers only. The iniquitous among Muslims are also dealt with this kind of punishment. It was for this reason that our elders used to fear Allah when they were favoured by Him with prosperity and comforts. They feared lest their prosperity should be a sign of '*Istidrāj*'

The next verse (183) is also related with '*Istidrāj*'. It said:

وَأَمْلِئْ لَهُمْ إِنَّ كَيِّدِي مَتِينٌ

"And I give them respite. Surely, My plan is firm."

That is, the disbelievers are left to enjoy their worldly life just for a while. Then, they shall be caught by punishment.

The verse no. 184 has refuted the false notion of the disbelievers that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was a man of unsound mind or was possessed by devil. It said:

أَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوا مَا بِصَاحِبِهِمْ مِّنْ جِنَّةٍ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ

"Have they not reflected that with their friend there is no madness? He is but an open warner."

The verse said that a little reflection on their part shall be enough to prove that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was neither a man of unsound mind, nor was he under the influence of Jinns. His matchless wisdom and knowledge is an obvious feature of his personality. Those having claim to wisdom and knowledge are astoundingly bewildered how a man of such extraordinary insight and sagacity could be blamed of madness? Blaming him with madness, in fact, is madness itself. He

is only an elucidator of realities and a warner against the punishment from Allah.

The verse 185 has invited mankind to practice two important things. Firstly, to make thoughtful observation of the creation of Allah, the heavens, the earth and the things existing between them. Secondly, to be mindful of the period of life given to an individual. It does not require to be a genius to perceive the signs of Allah's power and wisdom in every thing around us. A little amount of serious thought is enough to make one see that every thing, rather every particle of this world, is singing the praise of it's Creator and is, in itself, a strong proof of Allah's power and wisdom. Any one applying his intellect in conscious observation of things cannot avoid natural demand of faith in Allah, the One.

Being mindful of uncertain period of one's life makes him more active in attaining his objectives, because he is not sure how much time of life he has at his disposal. It would be noticed that all crimes and evil deeds are activated by disregard to one's death. Those who are conscious of their indefinite period of life mostly avoid to involve themselves in unwanted activities. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

أَكْثَرُوا ذِكْرَهَاذِمِ اللَّذَاتِ الْمَوْتِ

"Frequently remember the thing which eliminates the pleasures - the death."

The verse 185, has therefore said:

"Have they not looked into the kingdoms of the heavens and the earth, and into things Allah has created, and into the fact that their time may possibly have drawn near."

The Arabic word مَلَكُوت (Malakūt) signifies kingdom indicating a superlative degree, that is, the great Kingdom. The verse implies that the disbelievers have not used their common intellect in seeking the Truth which is evident in everything created by Allah, nor are they mindful of the uncertainty of life which may come to an end any moment, depriving them of all the chances of accepting the truth and repenting to Allah for their evil deeds. The last sentence of the verse warned them saying:

"In what other word, then, shall they believe after it?" That is Allah has provided them with transparent signs, both internal and external, of the right path and of the True Faith. Those who are neglectful of such clear signs, there is nothing in the world to guide them to the right path.

Verses 186 - 187

مَنْ يُضِلِّ اللَّهُ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ وَيَذَرُهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿١٨٦﴾ يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ أَيَّانَ مُرْسَاهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّي لَا يُجَلِّيهَا لِوَقْتِهَا إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ ثَقُلَتْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَا تَأْتِيكُمْ إِلَّا بَغْتَةً ۖ يَسْأَلُونَكَ كَأَنَّكَ حَفِىٌّ عَنْهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٨٧﴾

Whomsoever Allah lets go astray, for him there is no one to give guidance. And He leaves them wandering blindly in their rebellion. [186]

They ask you about the Hour, "When is it due to happen?" Say, "It's knowledge is only with my Lord. No one can unfold it except He, at it's time. It shall weigh heavy in the heavens and the earth. It shall not come upon you but suddenly." They ask you if you were aware of it. Say, "It's knowledge is only with Allah, but most of the people do not know." [187]

The preceding verses spoke of the obstinate ignorance of the disbelievers who rejected the true Faith, despite all the clear signs given to them by Allah. This could be a source of grief to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as he was highly considerate and the greatest well-wisher of the mankind. The verse 186 provides him with a consolation saying that whomsoever Allah leaves wandering in his ignorance and lets him go on with his evil deeds can never be guided by any one and Allah leaves him at the mercy of his abject desires. That is to say, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has done his duty by conveying the message of Allah as explicitly as was possible, and that their rejection of the true faith was not for any of his faults.

Among the themes of this Sūrah (Al-A'raf) three topics are of great

importance: the unity of Allah (*Tauḥīd*), the Prophethood (*Risālah*) and the life in the Hereafter (آخرة). These three principles are, in fact, the mainstay of the whole edifice of Islam. Exposition of the first two principles, the *Tauḥīd* and the *Risālah* have been provided in the foregoing verses.

The verse 187 speaks of the third principle, that is, the life in the Hereafter (آخرة). The revelation of this verse is related with the following incident reported by Ibn Jarīr and 'Abd ibn Ḥumaid on the authority of Qatādah.

The Quraish of Makkah once asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم by way of mockery as to when the Hour of doom was to occur of which he used to warn them so often. The verse was revealed in response to this question.

The Arabic word *Sā'ah* سَاعَةٌ signifies a short period without specific number of minutes or hours, while in our calendar it is a single unit out of twenty four units of the day and night. In Qur'anic terminology, however, it is used for the day when all the created beings will cease to exist, as well as for the day when all the creation shall be revived and presented before the Lord of all the creations. *Mursā* مَرَسَى signifies to stop or to stay, لَا يَجْلِيهَا is a derivative of تَحْلِيهِ which means to disclose or open. *Baghtatan* بَغْتَةً means suddenly while the word '*Ḥafiyyun*' حَفِيٌّ is used for a scholar or a knowledgeable person according to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه. The word is generally used for a person who invests his effort and employs all his resources to ascertain something.

The quintessence of the verse, therefore, is that the Quraish of Makkah should be answered that the exact time of the Doom is not known, and shall never be made known to any one. It is a divine secret which shall disclose itself by its sudden occurrence, as has been decided by the Qur'anic phrase لَا تَأْتِيَكُمْ إِلَّا بَغْتَةً "It shall not come upon you but suddenly".

Al-Bukhārī and the Muslim have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said

with regard to sudden occurrence of the '*Qiyāmah*' (The Doomsday) that it has been made a close secret. The wisdom behind it is obviously to make people live their lives peacefully which would have not been possible in case the definite time of death was known to them. Besides, those who do not believe in Doomsday would have made mockery of it by knowing the remotely long period of it's occurrence. The divine wisdom chose to keep it undefined in order to keep people vaguely in fear of it's dreadful events which, in fact, is an effective measure against crime and corrupt practices.

By implication, the above verses make us alive to the fact that once we have come to believe that the day of *Qiyāmah* has inevitably to come and all the created beings shall necessarily be presented before the Lord of all the creation and be called to account for all their minor or major deeds, and shall be rewarded or punished according to their performance in this world, the knowledge of time and period of the death becomes immaterial. It will not be wise to waste precious time of one's life in futile discussions like the time of occurrence of the Doomsday. On the contrary, human reason and wisdom demands that every moment of uncertain period of life is spent carefully in preparing oneself for the great day of judgement. This answer to the Quraish of Makkah made it clear that their question regarding the time of the Doomsday was a product of their ignorance. The next phrase of this verse speaks of another misconception of the disbelievers of Makkah. It said:

يَسْأَلُونَكَ كَأَنَّكَ خَفِيٌّ عَنْهَا

"They ask you as if you were aware of it."

They thought that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had, somehow, secured the knowledge of the exact time of the occurrence of the Doomsday and that he was not disclosing it for some purpose. They insisted him to disclose it to them. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was asked to answer them in these words:

قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

"Say, it's knowledge is only with Allah, but most of the people

do not know."

That is, it is not necessary for a prophet to know the definite time of the Doomsday or certain other matters that are kept secret by Allah. The lack of knowledge in such matters on the part of a prophet cannot, therefore, be taken as a proof against his prophethood. (The knowledge of a prophet can never be equal to the All-encompassing knowledge of Allah.)

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, however, was given knowledge of certain specific signs indicating that the Doomsday was in proximity. He has informed the Muslim *Ummah* of all these signs in explicit terms in his Traditions. In one of such Traditions he said that his appearance and the Day of *Qiyāmah* were as close to each other as two fingers of a hand. (Tirmidhī)

As for the reports giving the total age of this world as seven thousand years, they are the reports borrowed from some Israelite literature in certain Islamic books. They are neither authentic nor do they have any basis in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Similarly, geo-physical data of modern knowledge giving the age of this world as millions of years do not confront or contradict any of the Qur'ānic verse or any authentic Tradition of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. On the contrary, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم addressing the Muslim *Ummah* said in a Tradition:

"When compared to the early people, you are like a white thread of hair on the body of a black ox."

This gives us an idea of the enormous age of this world as thought by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Ḥafīz Ibn Ḥazm of Spain has, therefore, concluded that the exact age of this world cannot be assessed by any one.¹ (Marāghni)

1. By inference it seems physically impossible to have an exact assessment of the age of this universe, because it would give the exact time of the end of this universe which has been precluded by the above verse saying that the knowledge of the occurrence of the Doomsday is not known to any one but Allah. (Translator)

Verses 188 - 193

قُلْ لَا أَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِي نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ وَلَوْ كُنْتُ
 أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبِ لَاسْتَكْثَرْتُ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ وَمَا مَسَّنِيَ السُّوءُ إِنْ أَنَا
 إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ وَبَشِيرٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٨٨﴾ هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ
 نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا لِيَسْكُنَ إِلَيْهَا فَلَمَّا
 تَغَشَّاهَا حَمَلَتْ حَمْلًا خَفِيفًا فَمَرَّتْ بِهِ فَلَمَّا أَثْقَلَتْ دَعَوَا
 اللَّهَ رَبَّهُمَا لَئِنْ آتَيْتَنَا صَالِحًا لَّنُكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿١٨٩﴾
 فَلَمَّا آتَاهُمَا صَالِحًا جَعَلَا لَهُ شُرَكَاءَ فِيمَا آتَاهُمَا فَتَعَالَى اللَّهُ
 عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٩٠﴾ أَيْشُرِكُونَ مَا لَا يَخْلُقُ شَيْئًا وَهُمْ
 يُخْلَقُونَ ﴿١٩١﴾ وَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ لَهُمْ نَصْرًا وَلَا أَنْفُسُهُمْ
 يَنْصُرُونَ ﴿١٩٢﴾ وَإِنْ تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدَى لَا يَتَّبِعُوكُمْ سَوَاءٌ
 عَلَيْكُمْ أَدَعَوْتُمُوهُمْ أَمْ أَنْتُمْ صَامِتُونَ ﴿١٩٣﴾

Say, "I have no power to bring a benefit or a harm to myself, except what Allah wills. And if I had the knowledge of the unseen, I would have accumulated a lot of good, and no evil would have touched me. I am but a warner and a harbinger of good for people who believe." [188] He is the One who has created you from a single soul, and from him created his wife, so that he may find comfort in her. So when he covered her with himself, she carried a light burden and moved about with it, thereafter, when she grew heavy, they both prayed to Allah, their Lord, "If You bless us with a perfect child, we shall be among the grateful." [189] But when We blessed them with a perfect child, they ascribed partners to Him in what We blessed them with. So, far beyond is Allah than what they associate with Him. [190]

Do they associate those with Allah who do not create anything, rather, they are created (themselves)? [191] And they (the alleged partners) cannot extend to them any help, nor can they help themselves. [192] And if you

call them to the right path, they shall not follow you. It is all the same for them whether you call them or remain silent. [193]

The Verse 188 clears away a common misbelief of the people regarding the prophets of Allah. They thought that the prophets must possess the knowledge of each and everything in the universe, including the knowledge of the unseen future and unknown past. Similarly, they thought that the prophets must possess the power of bringing benefit or harm to any one out of their own will. The verse made it clear that the all-encompassing knowledge is an exclusive attribute of Allah which cannot be ascribed to any created being. Ascribing these exclusive attributes to any one other than Allah is the greatest transgression and is tantamount to associating partners with Allah. The very purpose of the revelation of the Holy Qur'an and the advent of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been to eliminate all the traces of plurality of god and to establish the purest unity of Allah (*Tauḥīd*).

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to declare that, not to speak of others, even he was unable to harm or benefit himself and that he did not possess the knowledge of the unseen. Had he possessed such knowledge, he would have stored all the good for himself and would have saved himself from every possible harm. There are evident instances in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم could not achieve his objectives inspite of all his effort, and in many other instances, he could not save himself from the damages and harm that reached him. The incident of the treaty of Ḥudaibiyah is an evident example when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his companions travelled all the way to Makkah in order to perform the 'Umrah but were stopped by the unbelievers of Makkah. Despite all their desire and effort, they had to go back to Madīnah without performing 'Umrah. similarly, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was wounded in the battle of Uḥud and the Muslims faced temporary defeat.

Perhaps, such events were allowed to happen, so that it may be demonstrated in practical terms that the Prophets, with due regards to their being closest to Allah and being the best of all the human beings, did not possess divine power and encompassing knowledge.

They were human-like other human beings. The Christians fell prey to the same error. They ascribed the divine attributes of Allah to their Prophet and went astray.

The Prophets, however, are invested by Allah with as much knowledge and power as no other human being has ever acquired. They Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was certainly favoured with the degree of knowledge which surpassed the knowledge of all other prophets. He informed the Muslims of many things which were to happen in future. All his foretellings were seen to happen exactly as he had foretold.

We can say that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was given the knowledge of a number of unseen things, but in Qur'anic terminology this is not termed as "عِلْمُ الْغَيْبِ" (the knowledge of the unseen). Therefore, on the basis of this we are not allowed to call the Holy Prophet ﷺ (the knower of the unseen), as knower of the unseen is none other than Allah.

The last sentence of the verse said, "إِنِّ أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ وَبَشِيرٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ" "I am but a warner and a harbinger of good for people who believe." That is, he has been assigned the duty of warning the evil doers against the punishment of Allah and give the good tidings of great reward by Allah to those who are righteous.

The next verse 189 speaks of the most basic belief of Islām that is Tauhīd and, at the same time, brings out the falsity of believing in more than one god. In the beginning of the verse Allah سبحانه و تعالى has mentioned the creation of Sayyidnā 'Ādam and Sayyidah Ḥawwā' عليهما السلام which was a manifestation of His perfect power. The verse said:

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا لِيَسْكُنَ إِلَيْهَا

"He is the One who has created you from a single soul and from him created his wife, so that he may find comfort in her."

This manifestation of Allah's great Power should have made mankind more grateful to Allah and they must have abstained from associating partners with Allah, but negligent as they were, they acted differently. Their neglectful attitude has been referred to in this verse and in the next, in these words:

فَلَمَّا تَغَشَّهَا حَمَلٌ خَفِيًّا فَمَرَّتْ بِهِ فَلََمَّا أَثْقَلَتْ دَعَا اللَّهَ رَبَّهُمَا لَئِنْ

اٰتَيْنَا صَالِحًا لَتَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِيْنَ فَلَمَّا اٰتٰهُمَا صَالِحًا جَعَلَا لَهُ شُرَكَآءَ فَيَمَّا
اٰتٰهُمَا فَتَعَلٰى اللّٰهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ

"So when he covered her with himself, she carried a light burden and moved about with it. Thereafter, when she grew heavy, they both prayed to Allah, their Lord, "If you bless us with a perfect child, we shall be among the grateful." So, when Allah blessed them with a perfect one, they ascribed partners with Him."

That is to say, at the initial stage of pregnancy the woman feels free to move about, but later when fetus grows heavy in her womb, the parents are anxious about their unborn. They are not sure if they would get a perfect child, because there are occasions when new born is not a normal child or is deaf dumb or blind etc. Having such apprehensions, they start praying for a perfect child and make promises with Allah to be grateful to Him if He favours them with a perfect child. Now, when Allah grants their prayers by giving them a normal and healthy baby, they ascribe partners with Allah, and thus their children, themselves, become the source of their misguidance.

It happens in a variety of ways. Sometimes they are misled by their false belief that their new born is a gift of some holy or godly person. Sometimes, they devote it to some living or dead person and start making offerings in their names. Some people take their children to them and bow their forehead before them. Sometimes, they involve themselves in Shirk شرك by naming their children like 'Abdullāt عبداللات 'Abd ul 'Uzza عبدالعزى 'Abdul Shams عبدالشمس or Bandah 'Alī بنده على etc., assigning their children to false gods, indicating that these children have been created or gifted by these gods or personalities. In short, all the above acts or beliefs are different forms of 'Shirk' شرك and the worst kind of ungratefulness to Allah, their Lord. The last sentence of this verse confirms misguidance of such people by saying:

فَتَعَلٰى اللّٰهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ

"So far beyond is Allah than what they associate with Him."

The above interpretation of this verse has made it clear that by referring to the Prophet 'Ādam and Hawwā' (Eve) عليهما السلام in the first sentence of this verse, the children of 'Ādam have been asked to follow

him and show their gratefulness to Allah, while the rest of the verse speaks of the misguidance and perversion of their descendants who, instead of being grateful to their Lord ascribed partners to Him.

This makes it clear that the Prophet 'Ādam and Ḥawwā' عليهما السلام have nothing to do with those who ascribed partners with Allah. The verse refers to the generations coming after them who were ungrateful to Allah and involved themselves in Shirk شرك. We have adopted this interpretation on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه reported by Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Ḥātim, in Tafsīr al-Durr al-Manthūr. The story related by Tirmidhī and Ḥākim about 'Ādam and Ḥawwā' being deceived by Satan has been taken by some scholars as an unauthentic Israelite report which is liable to be rejected. Many Muḥaddithīn, the scholars in *Ḥadīth* have, on the other hand, confirmed it. The above interpretation, however, clears away any possible doubt even if the story is taken to be authentic.

The above verse has provided us with the following points of significant value.

1. The men and women have been created in the same species in order that they may have a natural affinity and perfect understanding with each other, and discharge their duties towards the construction of a good society.

Havoc caused by immodesty

2. The rights and obligations assigned to the married couple basically aim at providing a peaceful environment at home. There are many social behaviours of modern age that are directly opposed to the above objective of creating a peaceful atmosphere. For example, the so called freedom of woman has caused havoc to social peace. The alarming number of divorces and serious altercations are mostly the result of free mixing of men and women in society. By experience we know that the growth of immodest practices in society is propotional to the destruction of social values and deprives man of peace at home and in the society.

3. The third point refers to the naming of one's children. It is prohibited to give names to the children like 'Abdul Shams (The slave of the Sun) or 'Abd al 'Uzzā (The slave of 'Uzzā) which purport to

assign them to entities other than Allah. Giving such names is prohibited even if parents do not really mean it. This practice is a great sin in Islām.

4. The best way of offering our gratitude to Allah is to name our children after the good names of Allah and His Messenger. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has, therefore, recommended the names like 'Abd ur Raḥmān, and 'Abdullah etc.

It is a pity that, one by one, we are depriving ourselves of all the Islamic manners and values. Firstly, we give our children non Islamic names simply following the fashion of the non-Islamic cultures. In addition, we find that most of the parents abbreviate the names of their children into English initials which makes it all the more difficult to distinguish them as Muslims. specially so, when we have worn the appearance of the non-Muslims, altogether. May Allah favour us with the real understanding of Islām and Islamic values.

Verses 194 - 198

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ عِبَادٌ أَمْثَلُكُمْ فَادْعُوهُمْ
فَلَيْسَتْ جِبَبُوا لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٩٤﴾ أَلَهُمْ أَرْجُلٌ
يَمْشُونَ بِهَا أَمْ لَهُمْ أَيْدٍ يَبْطِشُونَ بِهَا أَمْ لَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ يُبْصِرُونَ
بِهَا أَمْ لَهُمْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا قُلِ ادْعُوا شُرَكَاءَكُمْ ثُمَّ
كِيدُوا فَلَا تُنْظَرُونَ ﴿١٩٥﴾ إِنَّ وَلِيََّ اللَّهُ الَّذِي نَزَلَ الْكِتَابُ
وَهُوَ يَتَوَلَّى الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٩٦﴾ وَالَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ
لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ نَصْرَكُمْ وَلَا أَنْفُسُهُمْ يَنْصُرُونَ ﴿١٩٧﴾ وَإِنْ
تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدَى لَا يَسْمَعُوا وَتَرَاهُمْ يُنْظَرُونَ إِلَيْكَ وَهُمْ
لَا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿١٩٨﴾

Surely, those whom you call beside Allah are slaves like you. So, call them and they should respond to you if you are true. [194] Do they have legs to walk with? Or do they have hands to grip with? Or do they have eyes to see with? Say, "Call to your associate-gods, then, plot against me and allow me no respite. [195] Surely, my

protector is Allah who has revealed the Book and who does protect the righteous." [196]

And those whom you call beside Him cannot help you, nor can they help themselves. [197] And if you call them for guidance, they shall not hear. And you see them looking at you while they do not see. [198]

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to say to the unbelievers that your false gods are nothing but slaves like you, and being devoid of essential faculties of moving, seeing, hearing and speaking cannot help themselves, far from coming to your help in your need. If you are not sure, then "Call them and they should respond to you," and "Call to your associate-gods, then plot against me and allow me no respite."

The verse 196 has said:

إِنَّ وَلِيََّ اللَّهِ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْكِتَابَ وَهُوَ يَتَوَلَّى الصَّالِحِينَ

"Surely my protector is Allah who has revealed the Book and who does protect the righteous."

The Arabic word ولي rendered here as 'protector' also means helper. The word الكتاب (The Book) here refers to the Holy Qur'an, and the word صالحين (the righteous), according to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه, here refers to all those who do not take any one equal to Allah, including the prophets and other faithful Muslims.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to declare that he was not fearful of their opposition in the least since Allah, who had revealed the Qur'an to Him was his protector and helper. It may be noted that out of all the divine attributes of Allah, this verse spoke specially of His revelation to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. It is because the only reason of their hostility to the Holy Prophet ﷺ was his invitation to the message of the Holy Qur'an. He was therefore, sure to have been helped and protected by Allah. The next sentence provides us with a general rule that Allah does not only help and protect His messengers who have special favours of Allah, but also helps and protects all the Muslims who are righteous.

The last sentence "وَهُوَ يَتَوَلَّى الصَّالِحِينَ" "He helps and protects the righteous" has given us a general principle that in addition to helping the

prophets who hold the highest status among all the people, Allah helps and protects all the Muslims who act righteously. Therefore, the opposition or hostility of any one does not harm a true Muslim in the real sense of the word. Most often he is made to triumph over his enemies in this very world. If, for some good reason, he does not overcome and is apparently defeated, this, too, does not go to damage his real objective. His failure in this world is, in fact, his success in true sense, because the main objective of his life is to seek Allah's pleasure and to obey Him in each and every activity of his life. His failure, being from Allah draws him nearer to his objective of seeking Allah's pleasure.

Verses 199 - 202

حَذِّ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرٌ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿١٩٩﴾ وَإِنَّمَا يَنْزِعَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْعٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٠٠﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَائِفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تَذَكَّرُوا فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٢٠١﴾ وَإِخْوَانُهُمْ يَمُدُّونَهُمْ فِي الْغَيِّ ثُمَّ لَا يُقْصِرُونَ ﴿٢٠٢﴾

Take to forbearance, and bid the Fair and ignore the ignorant. [199] And if you are stricken with a strike from the Satan, seek refuge with Allah. Surely, He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [200] Surely those who are God-fearing, when they are touched by a visit from Satan, they become conscious, and, at once they are watchful. [201] As for the brethren of Satans, the satans drag them on into the error, and they do not stop short. [202]

The Ideal Manifesto of Qur'ānic Ethics

The above verse provides us with a perfect code and model discipline of moral excellences. It was through this discipline that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was trained and then was conferred with the title of صاحب خلق عظيم (The manifestation of all moral excellences) which is unique to him out of the whole mankind. After giving a description of obstinate ignorance, and immoral behaviour of the adversaries of Islam in the foregoing verses, the Holy Qur'ān, in contrast to the above, provides the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with some moral teach-

ings. The first is حُذِّ الْعَفْوَ (Take to forbearance). The Arabic word عفو , has many significations. Each of them can be taken to mean here. This is why the experts in the exegesis of the Qur'an have presented varied comments on this verse. The most agreed interpretation of this word is that it is an act which can be done with ease or without any difficulty. The first sentence therefore, shall mean "Accept what people can do easily," implying that, in the matter of Islamic obligations, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم should not demand high standard of deeds from the people. Rather, he should accept the degree of perfection which can be achieved easily by the people.

To make it more clear, let us take the example of *Ṣalāh* (the prayer) which in true sense means to isolate oneself from all the worldly thoughts and actions and stand before his Lord in perfect veneration. He is supposed to present his praise to his Lord directly as though he is addressing his Lord and making his supplications to Him directly with nothing and no one between him and His Lord.

This state of mind shows itself in a worshipper by some expressive signs like خُشُوعٌ وَخُضُوعٌ (submission and humbleness), which are achieved only by a few fortunate worshippers. This degree of veneration and love cannot be expected from all the worshippers. This verse has therefore, asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم not to demand the high standard of performance from the people, and to accept what degree of perfection they can achieve easily in their deeds.

The above interpretation has been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Zubair رضى الله عنه. Another report cited by Ibn Kathīr, has said that the Holy Prophet ﷺ, at the time of the revelation of this verse, said, "I have been commanded (by Allah) to accept common or unexceptional obedience from the people in their worships and behaviour. I have, therefore, decided to do the same as long as I am in their company." A large number of the exegetes of the Holy Qur'an like Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar, 'Abdullāh ibn Zubair, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنهم اجمعين and the scholar Mujāhid have confirmed the same meaning of this Qur'anic phrase.

Another meaning of the word عفو is to pardon or to forgive. Some of the exegetes have adopted this meaning here. According to them this Qur'anic phrase has asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to pardon the

errors and shortcomings of the people.

Imām Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, the great exegete of the Holy Qur'ān has reported that at the time of revelation of this verse the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked the Archangel Jibrā'il about the implication of this verse. The Archangel after confirming the meaning from Allah answered that you have been commanded to pardon the one who does you wrong, and to be generous to the one who gives you nothing, and to continue your relation with one who breaks off his connections with you.

Under the comment on this verse Ibn Marduwaih has reported, on the authority of Sayyidnā Sa'ad ibn 'Ubadah, that this verse was revealed when, in the battle of Uhud, Sayyidnā Ḥamzah رضى الله عنه was martyred and parts of his body were savagely cut off. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, seeing his body in such miserable condition, said, "I shall behave to seventy of their people the way they have behaved with Ḥamzah." This verse was revealed to him implying that it does not suit his dignified position. He should pardon and forgive people.

This is supported by another Ḥadīth reported by Imām Aḥmad on the authority of 'Uqbah ibn 'Āmir رضى الله عنه saying that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had instructed him of the same. That is, to pardon the one who does wrong to him, to keep relation with one who cuts off his relation with him and to give the one who deprives him. Bayhaqi also has reported from Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said to him. 'I teach you the manners better than the manners of all the early and the later people, that you should give the one who deprives you, pardon the one who does wrong to you and continue your relation with one who breaks off with you.

The above two meanings of the word عفو though, are different from each other but the purest essence of both is one and the same, that is, he should not demand the high standard of worship and deeds from the people and pardon them for their errors, and should not take revenge of their wrongs, and be generous to them with no regard to receiving any return from them.

The authentic records of the life of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم have shown that he demonstrated the truest picture of the above

Qur'ānic model of deeds and morals. This model appeared in full bloom when Makkah was conquered and his sworn enemies were at his mercy. At that time, he set all of them free saying that 'far from any thoughts of seeking any revenge against them for their injustices, he would not even blame them in any way for what had happened between them in the past.'

The second sentence of this manifesto or testament reads: **وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ** (and bid the Fair – 199). The word: **عُرْفٌ** ('urf) meaning 'recognized' refers to everything done in a way which is good and praiseworthy. The sense is that he should not seek to avenge the oppressive treatment meted out to him by his enemies, rather, he should forgive them but, along with it, he should also continue to ask them to do what was good and beneficial. Thus, he would not only be repaying evil with good and injustice with justice alone, in fact, he would be repaying them for all that by a higher degree of favor and grace – that of *Iḥṣān*.

In the third sentence, it was said: **وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ** (and ignore the ignorant). It means that he should, no doubt, forgo revenge against injustice, deal with his enemies having goodwill and concern for them, and softly explain the truth of the matter to them. But, in this process, there will be those ignorant diehards who would not still be impressed or affected by this highly gentle moral response. They would, in spite of that, display more of their ignorance and harshness. If so, he was advised not to be affected by their heart-rending comments and rustic challenges, offer no response in their terms, instead, stay away from and ignore them.

Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr has said that 'to ignore' also means that he should not repay evil with evil. It does not mean that he should stop giving good advice to them, for this would not be befitting in terms of the standing mission a prophet and messenger of Allah is charged with.

At this stage, according to an event reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās **رضي الله عنه**, it was during the period of the Khilāfah of Sayyidnā 'Umar **رضي الله عنه** that 'Uyaynah ibn Hiṣn came to Madīnah and stayed there as a guest of his nephew, Ḥurr ibn Qays. Sayyidnā Ḥurr was among the learned men of Madīnah who used to attend the advisory council of Sayyidnā 'Umar.

'Uyaiynah said to his nephew, Ḥurr ibn Qays, 'you are close to the Amīr al-Mu'minīn. Take an appointment for me to see him.' Sayyidnā Ḥurr ibn Qays requested Sayyidnā 'Umar that his uncle, 'Uyaiynah wanted to meet him. He gave the permission.

But, once 'Uyaiynah was in the company of Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq, he spoke to him in a manner that was uncivilized and contrary to facts while complaining that he neither gave them their full rights nor treated them with justice and equity. Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه was angry. Thereupon, Sayyidnā Ḥurr ibn Qays submitted, 'yā Amīr al-Mu'minīn, Allah Ta'ālā has said: خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ (Take to forbearance, and bid the Fair and ignore the ignorant - 199) and this person too is one of the ignorant ones.' Hearing this verse, his anger subsided and he said nothing to him. This habit of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه was well known. About him it was said: كَانَ وَقَاتًا عِنْدَ كِتَابِ اللَّهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ (He readily mellowed before the commandments of the Book of Allah, the Mighty, the Exalted).

This verse carries a comprehensive statement of noble traits of character. Some scholars have explained these briefly by saying that there are two kinds of people: (1) Those who are good in deeds and (2) those who are evil and unjust. This verse tells us to treat both kinds nobly. As for those who do good, accept what they offer as such. Do not investigate too much and do not be unnecessarily inquisitive. Do not demand good at its highest from them and accept what they come up with as sufficient. As for the evildoing, the instruction given is: Teach them to do what is good. Show them the way of righteousness. If they do not accept it and choose to stick to their straying and error and talk haughtily and aggressively, the appropriate course is to stay away from them and avoid responding to their ignorant comments. It is hoped that this approach may bring them round at some stage when they may realize their error.

In the second verse, it was said: وَإِنَّمَا يَنْزِعُكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْعٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (And if you are stricken with a strike from the Satan, seek refuge with Allah - 200).

This verse too is really a complement of the subject taken up in the first verse which instructs that the error made by the unjust and the ignorant should be forgiven and the evil done by them should not be

answered by counter evil. This is heavy duty. In fact, doing something like this is most irksome and hard on human temperament. Particularly on occasions such as this, the Shaiṭān is there to coax someone very normal into anger and somehow gets his client all set to fight. Therefore, in the second verse, it has been suggested that in case emotions of anger seem to be flaring up on such an occasion where your patience is under test, one should promptly figure out that this instigation is coming from the Shaiṭān. It has a standard treatment – seek refuge with Allah.

It appears in Ḥadīth that two men were quarreling before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and one of them was getting out of control in his fit of anger. He looked at him and said, 'I know some words which, if this person were to say, his rage will go away.' Then, he said, 'here are the words: اَعُوْذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ الرَّجِيْمِ (I seek refuge with Allah from the Shaiṭān, the Accursed). When this person heard the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم reciting it, he immediately said it after him. Suddenly, his anger was all gone.

An Unusual Coincidence

At this stage, the great Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr has written about an unusual coincidence. He says that there are three verses in the entire Qur'ān that appear as an embodiment of high moral teaching – and all three of them conclude with the need to seek refuge from the Shaiṭān. One of these is this very verse of Sūrah al-A'raf we are talking about. The second one is the following verse of Sūrah al-Mu'minūn:

اِدْفَعْ بِالَّتِيْ هِيَ اَحْسَنُ السَّيِّئَةِ نَحْنُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَصِفُوْنَ وَقُلْ رَبِّ اَعُوْذُ بِكَ مِنْ
هَمَزَاتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ وَاَعُوْذُ بِكَ رَبِّ اَنْ يَّحْضُرُوْنَ

"Repel the evil with what is good. We know best what they keep saying and you say: 'O my Lord, I seek refuge with You against the urgings of the Satans, and O my Lord, I seek refuge with You from that they be with me – 23:97, 98."

The third verse appears in Sūrah Ḥa Mīm as-Sajdah (also referred to as Sūrah Fuṣṣilat):

وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ اِدْفَعْ بِالَّتِيْ هِيَ اَحْسَنُ فَاِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ
وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَاَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ . وَمَا يُلْقِهَا اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ صَبَرُوْا ، وَمَا يُلْقِهَا اِلَّا

ذُو حِطِّ عَظِيمٍ . وَإِنَّمَا يَنْزَعَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْعٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ، إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ .

(And good and bad deeds are not equal. Repel with that which is better, whereupon he – between whom and you there was enmity – will be as if a fast friend. [34] And this quality is granted to none but those who observe patience, and this quality is granted to none but he who is endowed with a great fortune. [35] And if you are stricken with a strike from the Shaiṭān, then, seek refuge with Allah. Surely, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. [36] – 41:34-36)

In these three verses, instruction has been given to forgo and forgive people who incite anger, to return evil with good and, along with it, to seek refuge from the Shaiṭān. This tells us that the Shaiṭān takes special interest in human quarrels. Give them any opportunity where a quarrel is on, the Satans converge on it as their favorite hunting ground. No matter how sedate and forbearing someone happens to be, they would still incite him into anger and try to make them cross the limits.

There is a treatment for it. When a person sees his anger getting out of control, he should know that Shaiṭān is winning against his better self. He should then turn to Allah Ta'ālā and seek refuge with Him. This makes noble traits of character flourish at their best. Therefore, additional stress has been laid on the need to seek the protection of Allah against the Shaitan in the third (201) and fourth (202) verses as well.

Verses 203 – 204

وَإِذَا لَمْ تَأْتِهِمْ بِآيَةٍ قَالُوا لَوْلَا اجْتَبَيْتَهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَتَّبِعُ مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ مِنْ رَبِّي هَذَا بَصَآئِرُ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢٠٣﴾ وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ وَأَنْصِتُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿٢٠٤﴾

And when you do not bring them a sign, they say, "Could you not make up one?" Say, "I only follow what is revealed to me from my Lord." This is (a Book of)

insights from your Lord and a guidance and mercy for a people who believe. [203]

And when the Qur'an is recited, listen to it and be silent, so that you may be blessed. [204]

Commentary

Mentioned in the verses cited above is the proof that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is the true Messenger of Allah. Also answered there are doubts raised by his antagonists. Then, as a corollary, some religious injunctions have been taken up.

To prove that they are Messengers of Allah, all prophets, may peace be upon them all, are given miracles. It was in consonance with it that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the foremost among prophets, was blessed with so many miracles which exceed the number of those given to past prophets and which are clear too.

The miracles of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as proved from the Qur'an, and authentic Ḥadīth reports, are fairly numerous. Muslim religious scholars have written separate books about them. 'Allāmah Jalālu 'd-Dīn as-Suyūṭī's book, al-Khaṣaiṣ al-Kubrā, in two volumes, is a well-known work on this subject.

But, despite the manifestation of so many miracles, his opponents stuck to their unreasonable demands asking for ever-new miracles of their choice. This has also been mentioned earlier in this very Sūrah.

The first of the two verses cited above provides an answer to their demand as a matter of principle. To put it briefly, the miracle of a prophet is a testimony and proof of his mission as a Messenger of Allah. Take the example of the claim of a plaintiff that stands proved by some trustworthy evidence. The other party has not challenged it in any way. If so, no court in the world would give this party the right to demand from the plaintiff that it would accept the claim only when he produces its evidence from a number of particularly specified people. And that the said party would, without challenging the present evidence, not accept it. Therefore, after having seen so many manifest miracles, the antagonists had no right to say that they would take him to be a Messenger of Allah only if he were to show their custom-ordered miracles. This is nothing but a hostile demand that no court of justice would accept as valid.

So, in the first verse (203), it was said when he does not show them the miracle specified by them, they use it as a pretext to deny that he was a Messenger of Allah. Had he been one, he would have shown them the miracle of their choice! The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to tell them that his mission does not call for the showing of miracles on his own. Instead, his basic mission was to follow the injunctions sent to him by his Lord through the medium of *Wahy* (revelation) and it included the task of their preaching as well. Therefore, he was busy doing what he was assigned to do. As for the verification of his status as a Messenger of Allah, the miracles already manifested before them were more than enough for that purpose. Now that they have already seen those, the demand for some particular miracle is nothing but an exercise in hostility that is not worth noticing.

Then, out of the miracles shown, the Qur'ān by itself is a great miracle. It has challenged the whole world to come up with a small Sūrah the like of it and it has failed to do so. This, then, is an open sign that the Qur'ān is no human word, instead, is the inimitable Word of Allah, the most exalted.

For this reason, it was said: هَذَا بَصَائِرُ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ (This is (a Book of) insights from your Lord). It means that this Qur'ān has come from your Lord as a compendium of many proofs and miracles. Whoever deliberates into it, even summarily, could not part with it without believing that it was nothing but the Word of Allah, the most exalted, and that nothing created has anything to do with it. After that, it was said: وَهَدَىٰ ذَرْوَةَ لَفْقَرٍمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ (and a guidance and mercy for a people who believe). It means that, no doubt, this Qur'ān is a proof of what is true for the whole world, but it is an escort to the purpose of life and a medium of deserving the mercy of Allah Ta'ālā only for those who believe in it.

In the second verse (204), we have been told that the Holy Qur'ān has come as mercy for the believers. But, in order to benefit from this mercy, there are some conditions and rules of conduct. These have been delineated in the form of a general address as: وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ (And when the Qur'ān is recited, listen to it and be silent).

There are different reports about the background of these verses and about whether this injunction has appeared about the recitation of

the Qur'ān in Ṣalāh, or in Khuṭbah, or relates to the recitation of the Qur'ān in an absolute sense, be it in Ṣalāh or Khuṭbah or in some other condition. But, according to the majority of commentators, the correct position is that the way the words of the verse are general, so the rule laid down therein too is generally applicable to all conditions – except some particular occasions.

Therefore, the followers of Ḥanafī School have taken this verse to prove that the persons offering their prayer behind an Imām (i.e. the *muqtadīs*) should not recite. Even Muslim jurists who have directed the *muqtadīs* to recite *Alfātiḥah* behind the Imām, they too, having kept this verse in view have suggested that a *muqtadī* should recite only in an interval when the Imām is silent. However, this is not the appropriate occasion to take up this debate. Those interested may refer to standard works, brief or detailed, written by scholars on the issue.

The main subject of the verse is not but that the people for whom the Qur'ān has been declared to be mercy should realize the condition that they have to recognize the etiquette and respect aligned with the Qur'ān and observe it literally in practice. Then, the cardinal etiquette of the Qur'ān is that listeners should lend their ears to it when recited and remain silent.

The sense of lending ears to it not only includes listening to it but also obeying it and making the effort of acting in accordance with its injunctions. (Mazḥarī and Qurṭubī) Then, by saying: **لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ** (so that you may be blessed) at the end of the verse, a clear hint is given that the mercy of Qur'ān depends on the observance of rules of etiquette mentioned above.

Some important rules relating to listening and remaining silent when Qur'ān is being recited

In contrast with what has been said above, it is obvious that whoever flouts these rules and shows disrespect to the Qur'ān will deserve Divine wrath, not mercy.

As for listening to the recitation of the Qur'ān in the Ṣalāh and remaining silent therein, Muslims generally know about it – though, they do fall short in practice. Some of them would not even be aware of

the Sūrah recited by the Imām. For such people, it is imperative that they should realize the greatness of the Qur'ān, and listen to it attentively. This Islamic legal norm applies to the Khuṭbah of Jumu'ah etc. In addition to this verse, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has particularly said about the Khuṭbah:

إذا خرج الامام فلا صلوة ولا كلام

When the Imām comes out (for Khuṭbah), then, there is no Ṣalāh and no conversation.

And it also appears in a Ḥadīth that no one should say anything to anyone during *Khuṭbah*, not even a verbal advice is allowed to be given to another person to keep silence (if it has to be done, making a sign by hand should be enough). The objective is to emphasize that, during the *Khuṭbah*, no conversation of any kind, *tasbīḥ*, *durūd* or *Ṣalāh* or acts of similar nature are permissible.

Muslim jurists have said that the rule which applies to the *Khuṭbah* of Jumu'ah applies to the *Khuṭbah* of the two 'Eid prayers and that of Nikāḥ (marriage) for, at that time, listening to it and remaining silent is obligatory (*wājib*).

However, in case someone is reciting on his own under usual conditions other than Ṣalāh and *Khuṭbah*, the question arises: Will others be required to be silent and listen to it? Whether or not would it be obligatory (*wājib*) on them? The positions taken by Muslim jurists in this matter differ. Some consider listening and remaining silent in this condition too as *wājib* and doing against it a sin. It is for this reason that they have ruled that it is not permissible for anyone to recite the Qur'ān in a loud voice at places where people are busy doing their chores or are resting. They have also said that anyone who recites the Qur'ān in a loud voice in such surroundings shall be a sinner. This is as it appears in *Khulāṣatu l-Fatawā* and other juristic works.

But, some other jurists have distinguished different situations from one another by saying that listening attentively is *wājib* only on occasions where the Qur'ān is being recited for the express purpose of being listened to – such as, in Ṣalāh and *Khuṭbah* etc. And should it be that someone is reciting on his own, or some people are doing their own recitation at one place, then, it is not *wājib* to listen and be silent.

The reason is that it stands proved on the authority of sound Aḥādīth that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to recite the Qur'ān in his nightly prayers in a raised voice. At that time, his blessed wives would be sleeping. At times, his voice could also be heard from outside his roomette.

There is a Ḥadīth in al-Bukhārī and Muslim. It says that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم made a stop on his journey and when morning came he said , 'I recognized my Ash'arite companions by the voices of their recitation of Qur'ān during the darkness of the night and was able to pinpoint the direction and location of their tents – though, I had no idea during the day as to where they stay.

This event shows that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم never asked these Asharite companions as to why they were reciting the Qur'ān in a loud voice, nor did he tell those sleeping that they all had to get up and listen to the Qur'ān when it was being recited.

As based on narratives such as these, jurists have given some leeway in the case of recitation outside Ṣalāh. But, they all consider it better and preferable to listen and be silent when the sound of the recitation of the Qur'ān comes from somewhere – even if it is outside the Ṣalāh. For this reason, in places where people are resting or working, it is not appropriate to recite the Qur'ān in a loud voice.

This exposes the error of people who turn their radios to full volume at the time some program of recitation from the Qur'an comes on the air, particularly at places and gatherings where the crowd would not listen to it attentively. Similarly, the practice of relaying the recitation of the Qur'ān from the public address systems of mosques late at night, in a manner that the sound goes out and disturbs the sleep of the sleeping or the work of the working, is not correct.

‘Allāmah ibn al-Humām has written that, at the time the Imām in Ṣalāh, or the Khaṭīb in Khuṭbah, is reciting something about the Jannah or Jahannam, then, at that time, it is not permissible even to pray for Jannah or seek refuge from Jahannam. The reason is that, according to this verse, the promise of mercy from Allah Ta'ālā is for the person who remains silent when the Qur'ān is being recited – and whoever does not remain silent, to him the promise does not apply.

Yes, if one supplicates voicelessly after the recitation of such verses during his *nafl* prayers, it is an act proved by Sunnah, and is worthy of reward as well. (Mazhari)

Verses 205 - 206

وَاذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ تَضَرُّعًا وَخِيفَةً وَدُونَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ
الْقَوْلِ بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ وَلَا تَكُنْ مِنَ الْغَافِلِينَ ﴿٢٠٥﴾ إِنَّ
الَّذِينَ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَيُسَبِّحُونَهُ وَلَهُ
يَسْجُدُونَ ﴿٢٠٦﴾ السَّجْدَةُ

And remember your Lord in your self with humility and fear, and without speaking loudly, in mornings and evenings, and do not be among the heedless. [205] Surely, those who are with your Lord are not arrogant against His worship, and they proclaim His purity, and before Him they prostrate. [206]

Commentary

That the Holy Qur'ān should be listened to and that due etiquette should be observed when doing so was the subject in previous verses. Described in the present two verses, as held by the majority of commentators, is the injunction to remember Allah, in an absolute sense, as well as its attending etiquette – which includes the recitation of the Qur'ān. However, according to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, the word: *ذكر* (*dhikr*: remembrance) as it appears in this verse means the Qur'ān, and the rules of etiquette enunciated therein are also related to its recitation. But, this does not make much of a difference because according to the consensus of all, other modes of remembrance (*adhkār*: plural of *dhikr*), in addition to the Qur'ān, are governed by the same injunction and the same rules of etiquette.

In short, in this verse, human beings have been commanded to remember Allah and told when to do it and how to do it.

Rules of Voiced and Voiceless Remembrance [*Dhikr*]

The first rule of etiquette relates to the doing of *Dhikr* in a lowered or loud voice. The Holy Qur'ān has given two choices about that in this verse. It can be made secretly and voicelessly and it can be made

openly and loudly. About the voiceless Dhikr, it was said: **وَاذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ** which has been translated here literally as 'and remember your Lord in your self' (or, in your heart). This too would, take two forms: (1) That one does not move his tongue and simply thinks of Allah and His attributes in his heart that is known as *al-dhikr-al-khafiyy* (Dhikr of the heart) or *tafakkur* (pondering). (2) That one brings his tongue in alignment with what is happening in the deep recesses of his heart, lowers his voice and renders the letters carrying Divine names. The most preferred form of doing it is to first understand the sense of what is being said. Then, in synchronization with it, let him do two things simultaneously: Be fully conscious of its presence in his heart with his span of attention riveted to it and then, verbalize it too. The reason is that this is a form in which the tongue also joins in the Dhikr along with the heart. And if someone were to remain devoted to the thought within his heart alone, without uttering any word from his tongue, that too is a reward-worthy act in its own place. However, the lowest degree of it would be uttering the words of Dhikr but the heart stays denuded with it, even heedless towards it. About a Dhikr like that, the great sage, Rūmī said:

بر زباں تسبیح و در دل گاؤخر ایں چنیں تسبیح کے دارد اثر

On the tongue, glory to God

Cow and donkey in the heart!

What remembrance is it?

How effective will it be?

What sage Rūmī means is that Dhikr made through a heedless heart brings no vestiges and blessings of the genuine act of Dhikr. It does not rule out the reward and benefit that may issue forth from what may be a bland verbal Dhikr because there are occasions when this very verbal Dhikr becomes the channel, source and cause of the Dhikr of the heart. The constant utterance of the tongue starts affecting the heart as well. In case that does not materialize, no less is the satisfaction that there is at least one part of the body busy with the Dhikr of Allah. If so, that too is not devoid of its benefits and rewards. Therefore, people who fail to experience peace, attention and sense of presence in their Dhikr and Tasbīḥ (act of remembrance and glorification of Allah) should not abandon it as something useless.

They should, rather, continue with it and keep trying to attain the required degree of attention.

The second method of Dhikr has been given within this verse by saying: *وَدُونَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ* (and without speaking loudly). It means that it has to be in a lowered voice as compared to a raised voice. In other words, the person who is engaged in the Dhikr of Allah does have the option of doing a voiced Dhikr but its etiquette demands that one should not do it too loudly reaching the outer limits of shouting and screaming. Doing it in an average voice with due regard for the reverence-worthy nature of the activity is better. The fact is that doing the Dhikr of Allah and the recitation of the Qur'ān very loudly is a sign of disrespect one has in his heart for the addressee. Is it not that one cannot naturally speak up in a loud voice before someone he reveres by heart? Therefore, when the usual Dhikr of Allah or the recitation of the Qur'ān is made vocally, one has to be careful not to let the voice be raised any more than necessary.

To sum up, three methods of the Dhikr of Allah and the recitation of the Qur'ān come out of this verse. (1) Concentrate on the Dhikr of the heart only, that is, consider it sufficient to imagine and deliberate on the meanings of the Qur'ān, and Dhikr, while keeping the tongue totally unmoved. (2) Also move the tongue along with the Dhikr of the heart, without raising the voice to the level of being heard by others. Both these methods are included under the Divine command of: *وَاذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ* (And remember your Lord in your self). (3) The third method of Dhikr is that, alongwith attention by heart, there is a movement of tongue with voice, but it should not be raised any higher than necessary, in fact, it should be limited to the average level. This method has been proposed in the Qur'ānic statement: *وَدُونَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ* (and without speaking loudly). Another verse of the Qur'ān has explained it further by saying: *وَلَا تَجْهَرُ بِصَلَاتِكَ وَلَا تُخَافُتْ بِهَا وَاتَّبِعْ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلًا* It commands the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he should not recite the Qur'ān in a voice rising too high nor in a voice lowered too much. Instead, he should maintain a middle level between the two – [17:110].

This was the instruction given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنهم اجمعين about the recitation of the Qur'ān in Ṣalāh.

According to an authentic Ḥadīth, once the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came out of the house late at night. When he reached the house of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه, he saw him busy with Ṣalāh but he was reciting in a lowered voice. Then he reached the house of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه and saw that he was reciting in a raised voice. When these two companions came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the morning, he said to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه, 'when I went to you last night, I noticed that you were reciting in a lowered voice.' Sayyidnā Abū Bakr submitted, '*yā rasūlallāh*, the One I was reciting for has heard it. That is sufficient.' Similarly, he said to Sayyidnā 'Umar, 'you were reciting in a raised voice.' He submitted, 'By raising my voice in the recitation, I intended to drive away sleep and Shaiṭān both.' Giving his verdict, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم instructed Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه to raise his voice a little bit and asked Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه to somewhat lower it. (Abū Dāwūd)

According to a report in Tirmidhī, some Companions asked Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها about the recitation of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم whether he did it in a raised voice or a lowered voice. She said, 'at times he would do it loudly and at others, in a lowered voice. He recited both ways.'

Some early elders have favored reciting loudly during *nafl* Ṣalāh at night and in recitations outside the Ṣalāh, while some others have preferred reciting softly in a lowered voice. Therefore, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah has said that the person reciting has the choice of reciting either way. However, it is unanimously agreed that reciting loudly has some conditions to it. Firstly, there should be no apprehension of showing off in doing so. Secondly, the voice of the person reciting should not cause any inconvenience or pain to others. For example, it should not interfere in the Ṣalāh or recitation being made by others, or in their work, or rest. Under such eventualities, reciting in a low voice is more meritorious as unanimously held by all.

Then, the rule that applies to the recitation of the Qur'ān also applies to other Adhkar and Tasbīḥāt in that these could be made in a voice loud or low. It is permissible to do it either way – subject to the condition that the voice should not be so loud as to be against the norms of humbleness of heart and the formal etiquette of spiritual

devotion. In addition to that, the voice of the person so engaged in remembering Allah and glorifying Him should cause no disruption in the activities of people working or resting.

As to what is more meritorious – loud or low – it depends on who is doing it and under what conditions. The verdict differs. For some, loud is better, for others, low. Then, there are times when loud is better and there are other times when keeping it low or voiceless is beneficial. (Tafsīr Mazharī, Ruḥ al-Bayān etc.)

The second rule of etiquette mentioned in the verse under discussion requires that Tilāwah and Dhikr should be made humbly which is the outcome of one's realization that Allah Ta'ālā is great and most exalted and that one keeps the meaning and sense of what he or she is saying in sight.

The third rule of etiquette comes out from the word: **خِيفَةً** (*khīfah*: fear) in this very verse (205). Here, we have been told that one should be in a state of awe and fear while reciting or making Dhikr. As for fear, it means the fear of not being able to do justice to the great task of worshipping Allah and recognizing His greatness – perhaps, we may fall short or do something contrary to His reverence due on us. In addition to that, we have to be actively conscious of our sins and be fearful of His punishment, fearful of what would happen to us in the end for we do not know what and how it will be. So then, Dhikr and Tilāwah have to be done in the manner of a person who has been subdued by an aura of awe and fear.

These rules have also appeared in an earlier verse of this very Sūrah al-A'raf where they relate to prayer: **ادْعُوا رَبَّكُمْ تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً** (Supplicate to your Lord humbly and secretly – 7:55). Here, instead of **خِيفَةً** (*khīfah*: fear), the word: **خُفْيَةً** (*khufyah*: secretly) has been used which means saying it softly in a low voice – as though, it is also a rule of etiquette that Dhikr and Tilāwah should be done softly in a lowered voice. But, this verse makes it clear at the same time that doing voiced Dhikr is not prohibited, however, it is subject to the condition that one does not raise his voice more than necessary, definitely not so high as would cause the state of fear and humbleness to disappear.

Given towards the end of the verse are the timings of Dhikr and

Tilāwah – that it should be done in the mornings and evenings. It could also mean that one should be busy with the remembrance of Allah at least twice a day in the morning and the evening. And it is also possible that by saying mornings and evenings, the reference is to all timings of the day and night on the analogy of saying East and West and thereby meaning the whole world. If so, the verse would mean that one must remain committed to Dhikr and Tilāwah always, under all conditions. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها says that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was devoted to the remembrance of Allah at all times and under all conditions.

At the end of the verse, it was said: وَلَا تَكُنْ مِنَ الْغَافِلِينَ (and do not be among the heedless) which means that abandoning the remembrance of Allah and joining the heedless is a great loss.

The last verse (206) depicts the particular state and style of those close to Allah so that others may learn their lesson from it. It is said that those who are close to Allah Ta'ālā show no arrogance against worshipping Him. Being 'with' Allah Ta'ālā means being among those approved of and accepted by Him. This includes all angels and all blessed prophets and the most righteous men and women of the Muslim community. As for the sense of arrogance in this context, it means that they do not assume airs and do not fall short in their acts of worship on the false assumption of being big and special. Instead of doing anything of that sort, they take themselves to be weak and needy before Allah and keep devoting themselves to His remembrance, worship and glorification showing their ultimate humility by prostrating before their Lord in *sajdah*.

From here, we also learn that people who are blessed with the ability to engage in perpetual worship and remembrance of Allah are blessed with the sign that they are 'with' Allah all the time and fortunate to have His company.

Sajdah: Some merits and rules

Sajdah (prostration) as a unit of the Islamic 'Ibādah of Ṣalāh has been mentioned here exclusively since it occupies a distinct place among the rest of the units of Ṣalāh.

It appears in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim that a person asked Sayyidnā Thawbān

رضى الله عنه, 'tell me about something I should do that will take me to Paradise.' Sayyidnā Thawbān رضى الله عنه remained silent. He repeated the question. He still remained silent. When he came up with the question the third time, he said, 'I had asked the same question from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and he had ordered me to make *sajdah* repeatedly because for every *sajdah* you do, Allah Ta'ālā increases a rank and forgives a sin.' This person says that following his meeting with Sayyidnā Thawbān رضى الله عنه, he met Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā رضى الله عنه. He put the same question to him and he was given the same answer.

Again in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, but on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه, it has been reported that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'a servant of Allah is closest to his Lord when in *sajdah*. Therefore, when you are in a state of *sajdah*, pray most ardently, for it is strongly hoped that it will be answered.'¹

Let us bear in mind that *Sajdah*, by itself, is not a recognized act of 'Ibādah. Therefore, according to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, prostrating in *Sajdah* abundantly means that one should offer *nafl* Ṣalāh abundantly. An increased number of *nafl* Ṣalāh would naturally result in an increased number of *Sajdahs*.

But, if a person were to go in *Sajdah* alone and supplicate after that, it really does not matter. As for the instruction to supplicate in *Sajdah*, it is particular to *Nafl* Salats. It is not mandatory.

Sūrah al-A'raf ends here. Its last verse is an *Āyah* of *Sajdah* (requiring the person reciting and the person listening to prostrate in *Sajdah*). According to a report from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه appearing in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'when a son of Ādam recites a verse of *Sajdah* and then prostrates in *Sajdah*, the Shaiṭān runs crying. He says: Alas, man was asked to prostrate in

1. It should be borne in mind that supplication in *sajdah* should be in *nafl salah* and using the Arabic prayers either mentioned in the Holy Qur'an or in the *sunnah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. However, in a *sajdah* meant for supplication only, one can pray in whatever language he wishes (Muhammad Taqī Usmani)

Sajdah and when he obeyed, Paradise became his home, and I was asked to prostrate in Sajdah and when I disobeyed, Hell became my home.'

Alḥamdulillāh

**The Commentary on Sūrah al-A‘rāf
Ends here.**